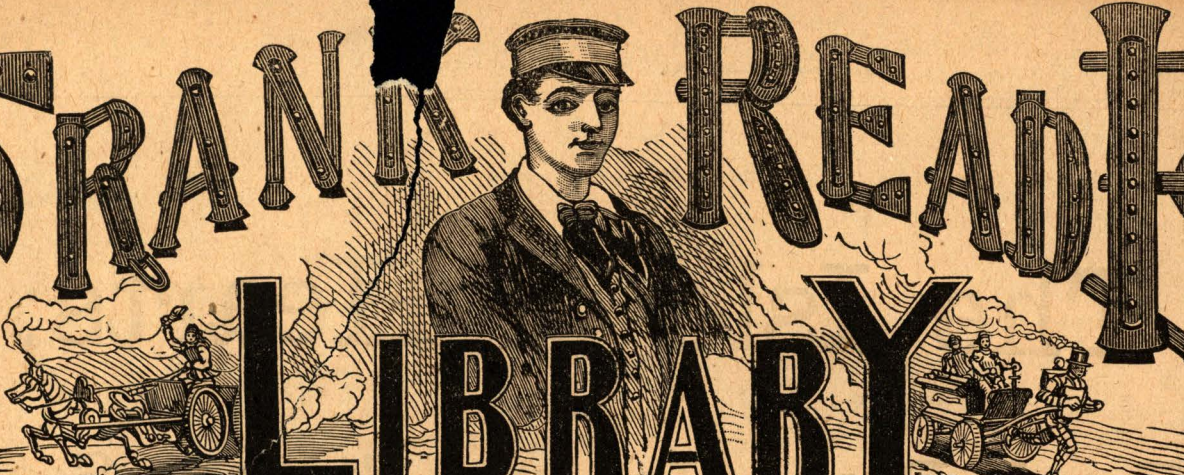


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The Isle of Hearts:

Or, Frank Reade, Jr., in a Strange
Sea With His Submarine Boat.

By "NONAME."



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Laow? Looks for all the world like old Aunt Melindy's hair trunk which came over in the Mayflower." Jed
tethered the steers and then began to examine this mystery which he had so strangely unearthed.

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The Isle of Hearts;

OR,

Frank Reade, Jr., in a Strange Sea With His Submarine Boat.

By "NONAME,"

Author of "The Lost Oasis," "In the Gran Chaco," "The Sinking Star," etc., etc.

CHAPTER I.

A WONDERFUL FIND.

"Gee durn them steers," exclaimed Jed Hankins as he dropped the plow handles and went forward to adjust the neck-yoke for the sixth time in as many minutes. "I'll be gittin' gosh-fired mad pooty soon, and then I'll give 'em the durndest wallop in they ever did have. Whoa, hist, thar!"

The neck-yoke fixed, big Yankee Jed looked at the dozen acres of corn land which he knew must be plowed, and rubbed the sweat from his brow with the back of his hand.

"It's a big job with green steers," he muttered. "But hyar goes, Gee, Buck. Whca up that, Bright! Hello! What in the deuce —"

The plow point struck something with a metallic click, the handle poked Jed in the ribs, and then the share caught on the object and as the steers gave a lunge up it came from the earth. Jed forgot to shout to the steers, so astonished was he at sight of the object.

It was a square metal chest of thickest iron, rusted and polluted with the earth. There were great iron bosses upon its corners.

"Jerusha!" ejaculated the Yankee. "What in durnation hev I struck naow? Looks for all the world like old Aunt Melindy's hair trunk which came over in the Mayflower."

Jed tethered the steers, and then began to examine this mystery which he had so strangely unearthed. He had Yankee curiosity enough to desire a knowledge of the contents of the box.

A vague recollection came to him of stories of buried treasure. The thought made his eyes bulge.

"Dod rot it, maybe I've struck a find. P'raps thar's gold in that 'ere box. B'gosh, I'm going to find out."

Jed made a close examination of the iron chest and found that it was fastened with powerful iron hasps. He could not easily force them.

However, he proceeded to the other end of the field, where a crowbar of iron leaned against the stone wall. Armed with this, he returned.

It is needless to say that he now was able to pry open the chest. The rusted cover flew open with a snap. The result was a disappointment to Jed.

"Humph!" he said.

The chest might have once been filled with gold ducats or Spanish pistareens. But it was not now.

Only one object was in it, and this was a large cylinder of foil. Jed unrolled the foil and a few sheets of ancient vellum rolled out. The vellum was closely written in pale ink and wonderfully well-preserved, considering its antiquity.

The rustic regarded his find with disappointment. This roll of vellum seemed to have no interest nor value whatever. Even a handful of gold coins would have pleased him.

But Jed did not throw his find away as many another might have done. Some prescience seemed to tell him that the writing on the vellum was of importance, or no such pains would have been taken to preserve it.

"I kain't read the durned stuff," he said impatiently. "I'll keep it howsumdover and take it up to old Polonius. He'll make it out."

Old Polonius was the village schoolmaster whom everybody in Hawkville regarded with respect, for the fact that he was a real college graduate and knew Greek and Latin.

He was a man of genius beyond a doubt. Polonius Hawkins was his Christian name.

Jed pulled the remains of the iron chest out of the field, and then put the pages of vellum in his coat pocket. Then he returned to the conquest of the steers and the reduction of the cornfield to a suitable condition for cultivation.

In the harassing course of events which a farmer meets with, especially when he has to rely upon a pair of green steers to do his farm work, Jed did not think of the vellum again for three days. Then he marched up to old Polonius' house one evening and rapped on the door.

Old Polonius shuffled to the door and opened it. He had to adjust his glasses four times to recognize his visitor.

"Oh, it's you, is it, Mr. Hankins?" he said heartily. "Come right in. I'm very glad to see you."

Now Jed was a warm politician and one of the school board of Hawkville. There was therefore a little more of method than madness in old Polonius' cordiality of manner. He selected the best chair in his sanctum for Jed.

It took some few cursory remarks to bring Jed around to the object of his visit. When he did state it, though, Polonius was interested.

"Let me see the manuscript, Mr. Hankins," he said eagerly. "It may be of great value. Who can tell? Your name may yet shine lustrous with those of the most famed archaeologists."

"Dunno anything about thet," said Jed, complacently. "But hyar's ther stuff. I kain't make head nor tail of it. If thar's any value to it, I'll pay ye well for the readin' of it."

"Ah, yes, yes!" said Polonius, adjusting his glasses. "Let me see! Vellum, yes, a real old sheep-skin of the seventeenth century. And the hand-printing is excellent. Hum! It's in English, too. Why, this is easy!"

The old professor sat down at the table and plunged into the contents of the vellum. For a long time he studied them, and his manner was that of tremendous excitement. When he had finished he turned to Hankins.

"Wonderful!" he exclaimed. "You can't imagine, sir, what a most remarkable discovery you have made."

"Eh?" ejaculated Jed. "What is it?"

"I'll read it to you."

With this Polonius read in a deep, sonorous voice:

"Page 210 of the log book of the English ship Anne. 1689. Anno Domini.

"Came this day, the 10th of April, into a strange sea, the knowledge whereof no man ever had yet, but which these presents will give. Two months' sail from the bay of Reyhiovih, Iceland, northward, and thence north by the capes of Greenland, coming to two tall mountains, the whereof none like them are found. Here we sailed between into some strange sea of very white water with land to the north of reddish cliffs.

(Here followed many pages of detailed description and nautical observations of no great value, save to a mariner.)

"On the 12th day we came to a strange archipelago of many isles. These were with wild cliffs and very black sands, and all were shaped much like a heart. The whereof being so strange we were minded so to call them the Isles of Hearts. We here landed, and saw much gold in the cliffs, the which we could not claim, as no hammer could break it. And a hurricane blowing us away, we left by mischance our mate and nine of our crew, men and women, on the isles, and saw them not again, for the reason that we could not again find the isles.

"Much gold is in these Isles of Hearts, and the secret whereof our skipper will keep that we may some day return and carry it away. Whereof this record is the only direction for the finding of the isles, and whereof we do guard it as with our lives. God give me courage to once more find the said isles and recover the gold. Whereof we set our names.

"Dudley Austin, Captain.

"Albion Brown, Second Mate.

"And eighteen survivors of the ship's company and passengers, men and women.

"God save Merry England."

This was the valuable part of the vellum's record. Polonius read it slowly and to the easy understanding of Hankins, who listened like one who first hears the wondrous tales of the Arabian Nights.

"Whew!" exclaimed Jed, after the professor had finished. "Do you s'pose that's all true, Polonius?"

"I see no reason to doubt it," replied the school-teacher.

"The Isles of Hearts," exclaimed Jed, reflectively. "And they say they're covered with gold. That settles it. Look hyar, Polonius."

Jed's manner was ominous. The school-teacher looked alarmed.

"Well, Jed!"

"I want to impress one thing on yure mind."

"Eh?"

"Yew ain't to breathe a word of this to a livin' soul. Do yew understand?"

Polonius stared.

"I understand."

"Now I'll tell yew. I'm goin' to find thet Isle of Hearts an' git thet gold. I reckon when I do, Melindy Curtis won't turn up her pooty nose at me any more—eh?"

"I should say not," replied Polonius vaguely. "But——"

"What?"

"You are not a sailor, Jed. How are you going to make that trip?"

"Gosh hang it, I'll show yew. I ain't a sailor, but I kin hire sailors, an' I'm gwine to mortgage my farm to do it."

"Don't do it, Jed."

"Why not?"

"I am afraid you will never be able to pay off the mortgage."

"Yew are, eh? Wall, if I don't, they kin have the farm. But don't yew fret. This 'ere thing was all to be. I believe things is ordered jest as they air to be, and the Supreme Power put this in my way. I'm the legal owner of all that gold, an' of them Isles of Hearts, fer that matter. It's been sent to me, an' I'd be a durn fool not to take it. Naow yew mark my word, Polonius—I'm coming back to this taown with thet gold.

"They dew say that the United States is like to annex Hawyee an' like enough Cuba, and thet Russia an' England air talkin' about annexin' China. This 'ere annexing business is somehaow gettin' to be quite a fad, an' dang my buttons if I don't annex the Isles of Hearts, naow that they're thrown right at me? Did yew ever know Jed Hankins tew be behind their times? Not a bit of it, an' the next thing yew'll hear of, Polonius, I'll be writin' yew a letter with a diamond-tipped pen on a gold-lined sheet of writin' paper, an' the monogram of the Hankinses on the top of it. Whew! Won't Melindy Curtis look up a bit! Butter won't melt in her mouth till she's mine. Heigho! What dew yew say about it, Polonius?"

The school-teacher looked up with mild reproof in his blue eyes.

"I think you are unduly exciting yourself, Jed Hankins," he said, calmly.

Without a word further Jed took his hat and went home.

CHAPTER II.

JED MAKES UP HIS MIND.

Of course in such a small community as Hawkville, the particulars of Jed Hankins' find was known to every man, woman, boy and girl in just one hour and forty-five minutes. And when the last denizen heard the story, he learned that Jed had just dug up a box of gold coin and the title of an island in the South Pacific which exported one million dollars' worth of guano per year, which most astounding bit of news set Hawkville by the ears. Such is a mild sample of the magnifying power of village gossip.

Jed himself was at first surprised by being congratulated upon his ownership of guano, and was asked what sort of gold coins he had found, and were they valuable to the coin collector, and so forth.

At first Jed denounced the coward. Then he grew very angry, and wound up by refusing to answer any questions at all. The which gave the gossips only more latitude for work.

But Jed lost no time in carrying out his plans.

His mind was fully "set" on the discovery of the Isle of Hearts. Like all Yankees he was ingenious and fertile in expedients.

Now Jed was a great reader.

He haunted the village library at all times, and was a regular subscriber for many current newspapers. So he was far from being an uninformed man.

He procured maps of Greenland and the North Sea, and spent many night hours in studying them. He found also in the vellum manuscript other data which aided him greatly in locating the possible entrance to the strange sea.

Finally he became so confident of his clew that he felt sure that he could direct a sea-captain how to sail right to the spot.

And now other difficulties began to suggest themselves to Jed.

What sort of a craft could he charter? It must have a captain and a crew.

What sort of men would they be? He could not keep from them the object of his trip.

He knew enough of human nature to be willing to distrust the ordinary rough class of sailors, whose cupidity would surely be excited by the discovery of gold. They would surely assume the right to a large share, and perhaps seek to claim it all.

In the event of trouble he would be only one against many, and the question of redress, or even fair play, would be very remote indeed.

As Jed pondered these matters over, he began to see the real difficulties of his project. But it did not in the least alter his determination.

While in this dilemma a sudden way out of his difficulties dawned upon him.

"Gosh hang it!" he exclaimed, springing up, "why didn't I think of that before?"

He sat down to a table and consulted a file of newspapers. In one of them, of a few days previous, he found the following:

"FRANK READE, JR.'S LATEST INVENTION!"

"THE NEW SUBMARINE BOAT."

"Mr. Frank Reade, Jr., the wonderful young inventor, whose fame is world wide, has just completed his new submarine boat, and it is a marvel of ingenious devices. The writer of this took a slight trip into watery depths aboard it only the other day, and enjoyed a novel experience. Mr. Reade has planned to take a deep sea trip to some distant part of the world before long."

Jed read this over several times. Then he did a heap of thinking.

It seemed to him that here was a method by which he might gain his ends. He knew Frank Reade, Jr., by repute. Indeed, Readestown, the home of the young inventor, was not far distant from Hawkville.

He reflected that Frank Reade, Jr., was a wealthy man. He could be trusted with the secret, certainly farther than any sea captain or ship's crew.

But could he be induced to undertake the trip? Jed believed that he could.

"Gosh all hemlock!" he exclaimed, as he leaped up; "that settles it. I'll jest take the keers and go up tew Readestown, an' see Mr. Reade and hev it settled. If he won't dew it, why I'll know it, that's all."

Jed was a man of action.

It took him but a short while to pack his grip. He did not neglect to put in the all-important vellum.

He consulted a time-table, and found that a train departed in twenty minutes. This would give him just time to reach the station.

He hurried away with long, loping strides. As he went down the village street heads were craned out of windows, and the startling report went out that Jed had been called to his island to look after his interest in guano shipments.

In due time the train rolled into Readestown and Jed alighted.

It was easy for him to find his way to Frank Reade, Jr.'s machine shops, and thither he went. At the gate he was met by a stumpy little coon blacker than stove polish.

"Yo' wants to see Marse Frank, eh?" said the coon, looking him over critically. "Mebbe yo' kin tell dis chile wha' yo' want to see him fo'?"

"Not by a jugful!" said Jed. "Yew jest carry my name up an' tell him it's a very important bizness!"

"Huh!" sniffed Pomp. "'Specs yo' ain' one ob dem cranks wha' comes here fo' to bother Marse Frank? I take yo' name up if yo' tell me wha' yo' want to see him fo'."

Jed laid down his grip and spat upon his hands.

"Look hyer, nigger!" he said, angrily; "don't yew undertake fer to call me a crank! I'll make dough of yew in jest a minnit and a quarter. Air yew goin' tew take my name up tew Mister Reade?"

There might have been trouble in a few moments, but at this juncture a pleasant-toned voice was heard in the yard beyond.

"What is the matter, Pomp? What means the uproar?"

"Golly!" cried the coon, "here am a big jay finks he's gwine to lick dis chile. Huh! he kain't lick a postage stamp!"

"Yew jest try it on an' see," bluffed Jed.

"I'se done ready."

"Hold on!" said Frank Reade, Jr., himself, stepping out into view. "We won't have any trouble just yet. What is your business with me, sir?"

Jed saw a tall, finely-built and handsome young fellow. This was Frank Reade, Jr., the inventor.

"Wall," said the countryman, scratching his head reflectively, "it's a mighty important business, yew kin be sure. I don't keer to state it afore this sassy nigger."

Pomp made a grimace, but Frank said:

"Pomp, you may retire."

"A' right, sah!"

The coon turned a flip-flap, rolled his eyes at Jed and vanished from sight. The countryman drew a breath of relief.

"Wall, I'm durned glad he's gone," he said, candidly. "Naow we kin talk. I've got a heap to tell ye!"

And without reserve Jed went on to tell his story entire. He described the finding of the iron chest and the reading of the manuscript by Professor Polonius.

At first Frank listened idly, but soon he grew intensely interested. "Naow," said Jed in finishing, "I've a heap of faith in yew, an' I feel sure yew'll use me well. I'm willin' to dew what's right. Will you help me ter find thet air Isle of Hearts with yure submarine boat?"

"Let me see the manuscript," said Frank.

Jed unhesitatingly complied.

Frank looked it over and examined the material closely. His face, however, was inscrutable, but he said:

"Jed Hankins, are you willing to trust me?"

"Eh?" stammered the countryman. "Trust ye? Why, sartin."

"Then let me take this manuscript until to-morrow. I will return it to you safely then."

For a moment Jed looked penetratingly into Frank's eyes. Then he thrust out one hand and said:

"Yew kin bet I'll trust yew. I never saw a man with your eyes thet wasn't as honest as a gold dollar. Just keep that manuscript as long as ye please. Only I hope ye'll decide to come to my terms."

"That I will answer to-morrow," said Frank, with a smile. "Come here to-morrow, and Pomp shall receive you with better grace. Wait a moment, please."

Frank pressed an electric button in the gateway. The next moment the clatter of feet was heard, and the coon, Pomp, again appeared from the yard. But this time behind him came a red-haired, comical little Irishman.

Both glared at Jed, but Frank said:

"Barney and Pomp, I wish to introduce you to a friend of mine—Mr. Jed Hankins. Remember that he is always welcome here."

"All roight, sor!" cried Barney, with a mechanical movement of his bulldog jaw.

"Didn't know dat, sah," said Pomp, apologetically. "I'membah wha' yo' says, sah."

And away they went out of sight. Frank turned with a smile.

"Barney and Pomp are my most faithful and trusted employees," he said. "They may be a bit over-zealous at times, but I don't think you will have any further trouble with them."

"Gosh-a-mighty! Yew kin bet I won't," said Jed, ominously. "I'll smash that nigger if he ever sasses me agin. But that's neither here nor there. I'll be on hand to-morrer, Mister Reade."

"All right," said Frank. "Good-by!"

Jed vanished. Then Frank took the manuscript and went to his private office. He was soon deeply engrossed with it.

Before he had finished it his mind was made up. He was resolved to fall in with Jed's plan.

"It offers me better than the opportunity I want," he declared. "Nothing will please me better than a tour of exploration to the deep seas off Greenland. We will find this strange sea spoken of in the manuscript if such a thing is possible."

Frank now arose from his desk and passed out into the yard. He approached a large artificial basin of water or tank, which was in turn connected with a canal leading down to the river.

In this tank floated the famous invention, the submarine boat "Grampus."

The "Grampus" was all ready for a lengthy cruise. Only that day the stores had been put aboard.

As Frank saw the boat now, it looked every inch a marvelous triumph.

In its lines it was not unlike a modern battle ship, though by no means so cumbersome or ponderous in proportion to its size.

Its hull was long and narrow of beam, with double decks. The upper decks were protected with brass guard rails. Above the main deck there rose a high conning tower, in which was the pilot-house with the steering gear and machinery of the boat.

Of course the motive power of the "Grampus" was electricity. The system was Frank Reade, Jr.'s, own invention, and also a secret.

The boat was provided with many plate glass observation windows, all of which, with the doors, could be hermetically sealed while the boat was under water. These doors were provided with vestibules, which will be described in detail in the course of the story.

In all its appointments, mechanically and otherwise, the "Grampus" was a floating palace.

The cabins were richly furnished, and embraced elegant state-rooms for the crew, a cooking galley, storerooms, and a gun room. Nothing

was lacking to make of the "Grampus" a suitable craft for cruising in dangerous seas.

The crowning triumph of the boat, however, was its automatic tank, by which it was enabled to rise or sink to any desired depth.

This was operated by means of valves and tubes and a system of pneumatic pressure.

Over the "Grampus" floated the flag of America, together with Frank Reade, Jr.'s, own flag of the star and circle of gilt on a blue ground. For Frank had adopted this as his own pennant. This is a brief description of the wonderful submarine boat.

CHAPTER III.

A PROPOSAL BY WIRE.

FRANK surveyed the "Grampus" for some moments critically, and then went aboard. He passed through the cabin and saw that all was in apple pie order.

He went down into the engine room and inspected the machinery. He came up with an air of great satisfaction.

He met Barney on the after deck. The Celt bowed and scraped profoundly.

"Look here, Barney," said Frank, seriously. "Are you sure that all is ready aboard the "Grampus" for a long cruise?"

The Celt ducked his head.

"Shure, sor!"

"Then we will be prepared to leave Readestown day after to-morrow, which is Thursday. We will leave at a very early hour in the morning, and I wish the departure to be kept as quiet as possible."

The Celt ducked his head.

"All roight, sor?"

"Now be off and see that nothing is left undone."

A short while later Frank went home and retired that night to dream of the Isle of Hearts and many thrilling experiences. It is needless to say that Jed Hankins was doing the same.

The next day Jed was on hand to receive the verdict.

It is easy to guess that he was delighted with Frank's decision. He rubbed his rough hands briskly and chuckled with great glee.

"By 'taters!" he exclaimed exuberantly. "I reckin Melindy Curtis will open her eyes a bit when she hears about this. Durned good thing to make her come to terms aforehand. Hanged if I don't go up an' see her afore to-morrer comes. No, I'll write her a letter. No, by gingerbread, that won't dew! I won't hev any time tew git a reply!"

"You might wire her," said Frank with a smile.

"Telegraf, yew mean? Why, sartinly. Gosh hang it, it'll cost a leetle more, but what dew I keer for that? Ain't I goin' tew bring home gold tew burn?"

Jed was enthused with the idea. The more he thought of it, the better satisfied he became that it was the plan for him.

He was determined to know his fate beforehand. It did not seem to occur to him that a telegram would be a public avowal of his passion, at least so far as the telegraph operators went. But for that matter Jed didn't care.

He made his way post haste to the telegraph station. Securing a blank, he wrote in a great scrawling hand as follows:

"Miss Melindy Curtis,

"Hawkvile.

"Dearest Melindy: You know how often I've spoken to you of my love for you, and how I would like tew have you for my wife. Now I'm on the track of a million dollars or more in gold, an' I can make yew the happiest woman in Hawkvile if you say so. Haow is it? What dew yew say? Answer this at my expense.

"Yours till death,

"Jedediah Hankins."

With a sober face Jed walked up to the telegraph operator. She was a rather prepossessing young lady and wore a very yellow necktie.

But when she glanced at the message the length of it caused her to give a start. She glanced at Hankins. He certainly did not look like a newspaper correspondent.

But, as she read the lines slowly and with some difficulty, a vivid crimson began to creep up to her temples, and there were frequent coughing spells of a violent kind, in which her head was lowered far below the level of the shelf. Jed stared at her, and finally asked:

"Be yew in consumption?"

This was too much for the fair operator, and this time a more violent coughing spell than ever took her head again beneath the shelf. But presently she looked up, and Jed saw tears in her eyes, which, of course, he supposed were placed there by the violent exertion of the larynx and thorax. But the reader may draw his own conclusions.

"Do you wish to send this message just as it is, sir?" she asked, in a curious suppressed voice.

"In course I do," declared Jed. "An' whoop her right along, tew. I want an answer jest as quick as I can get it."

"That will depend on the other party," said the fair operator.

"And on yew, too!" snorted Jed.

"I beg your pardon, sir. It is the other girl," said the operator,

with a slight tinge of mischief. "It depends on her, not me. Shall I make it collect?"

"Eh?"

"Shall we collect the pay at the other end?"

"What other end?"

"Excuse me, but you do not understand. Shall I collect the pay for this message of the party to whom it is sent?"

"Haow in time air yew goin' tew dew that? Ain't she twenty-five miles away?" asked Jed.

"Do you wish to pay for the message or do you wish her to pay for it?" asked the operator with asperity.

"Why, I'll pay fer it in course," sputtered Jed. "Ain't I the one sendin' it? Haow much is it?"

"One dollar and sixty cents."

"Sho! Anything off fer cash?"

"Nothing."

Jed slowly pulled out his leather wallet and laid a two dollar bill on the shelf. The operator snatched the bill up, and in the twinkling of an eye put forty cents in change down where it had been.

Then she turned to the instrument and called up Hawkville. Jed sat down on a bench and waited. He thought he could hear queer chuckling sounds from the office beyond! Had he been able to see he would perhaps have been surprised to see the operator in paroxysms of laughter.

And had he been an expert telegrapher he would have been able to interpret the clicks of the instrument as follows:

"Hello, Hawkville!"

"Hello, Readestown!"

"Say, I have a message here for Melinda Curtis from a jay here in the office. Wait until I give it to you verbatim, and you'll have a fit. He's just paid one dollar sixty for it."

"All right, let's have it."

"I say, deliver it as soon as you can, for he's waiting and we must see what the answer is."

"All right."

Then Jed's message traversed the wire to Hawkville verbatim. It was heard in several other offices on the circuit, and was the cause of no end of chaff.

Nearly an hour elapsed.

Jed had got nearly tired of waiting, when the operator jumped up and said:

"Hawkville calls. An answer to your message, sir."

"It's about time," growled Jed.

Clickety—click—click—clickety—click!

"Hello, Readestown!"

"All right, Hawkville!"

"I say, we delivered your jay message. You ought to have seen the girl who received it. She was mad enough to kill a man. I'll send her answer."

Clickety—click! went the instrument.

Pretty soon the operator arose, and with averted face handed Jed the reply. The countryman took it and read:

"JEDEDIAH HANKINS:—

"If you ever dare to send me such an insinuating message over a public wire again I will have you arrested for insult. I would not marry you if you had ten million dollars and it was to save my life.

"MELINDA CURTIS."

For a moment Jed stood agape, staring at the written lines. The wind was completely taken out of his sails. He was a water-logged craft on love's perilous ocean.

"Gosh a'mighty!" he exclaimed in an undertone, "I never thought of ther publicity of it. Hang me ferja fool!"

"One dollar, please," said the operator.

"Hey?"

"One dollar."

"What fer?" demanded Jed.

"This message."

"But I paid yew."

"You forget. This is the return message. You told the lady to answer at your expense. One dollar, please, for forty words."

Jed gasped, but down he went into his pocket and fished out a dollar. Then with a snarl of disgust he slid out of the place.

"Two dollars an' sixty cents fer that leetle scrape!" he muttered.

"Ther best veal calf I own wouldn't bring more'n that. Gosh dang my buttons! It's all up with Melindy naow. I orter waited an' seen her in pusson. Durn that telegraf! I never did like new fangled ideas, anyway. Wall, yew kain't tell about gals. They is curus creeters. Mebbe when I git hum, an' she sees the money, she'll change her mind. I hain't gin up yit!"

For tenacity of purpose and out and out bulldog determination, let us recommend one to the genuine Yankee, of which Jed Hankins was a good type.

But Jed dropped love matters at once. From that moment he was wholly absorbed in the project of finding the Isle of Hearts.

He was right on hand at the appointed hour for sailing. He was assigned to a state-room on board the Grampus, and became one of the crew.

At the early hour of four on that Thursday morning the Grampus slid out of its basin into the little canal, and was soon on its way to the river.

Dropping down the river to the sea was accomplished in due time, and then the long voyage to the Greenland coast was begun.

Frank did not travel beneath the surface, for the Grampus could proceed at greater speed above the water. She was extremely seaworthy, and would be safe on the surface unless some great storm was encountered.

In such case it would be possible to travel under water with complete immunity from the waves. So little was to be feared on this score.

CHAPTER IV.

THE BEAR HUNT.

THE little Grampus held on its northward course for many days. She kept steadily on, day and night, and one day Frank took his bearings and found that they were on a parallel with the upper part of Newfoundland.

This was good progress, but yet a long stretch of sea lay before them and Cape Farewell, the tip of the continent of Greenland. It was a sea peopled with icebergs also, and therefore not free from danger.

Many vessels had been spoken on the way, and several severe storms had been met, but the Grampus easily kept out of the way of the latter.

She could not travel so fast under water, but yet she could do it with safety. It was a novel sensation, and impressed Hankins greatly.

The countryman had never before been to sea.

For the first week of his experience he was fully repentant of having attempted a sea voyage. The deadly *mal de mer* had him in its remorseless grip, and he was utterly abandoned to any kind of a fate. His visions of Hawkville and home were very alluring.

But strangely enough his nausea vanished while the boat was under water.

"That is easily explained," said Frank. "If you wish to ride on any vessel with immunity get down as near the keel as you can. The motion is hardly perceptible there."

And the motion of the Grampus while under water was, of course, far different from that of the surface. In fact, there was hardly any perceptible motion.

But Jed's seasickness wore off in the chill Arctic air above the Newfoundland parallel. He became once more enthused with the project in hand.

But one peculiar fact was noticed. Not since leaving Readestown had he once made mention of Melinda Curtis.

She had seemed to drop out of the perspective of his mind. Other matters had supplanted her.

The dodging of icebergs now became a daily diversion.

It was no easy matter, either, for on a dark night the search-light sometimes failed to distinguish them from the yeasty sea. And this very similarity of sea and berg in color led to a well-nigh disastrous accident.

The Grampus had made a long day's run. For the last few hours not a berg had appeared in view.

"Bejabers!" cried Barney, "I don't know phwat to think av it. Shure, it can't be that we're out av the course of them."

"I have noticed that they came in divisions or squadrons," said Frank. "Perhaps we have passed through one division, and have yet to meet another."

"Shure, it must be so," declared Barney. "I'll kape me weather eye open for another squadron."

The day was drawing to a close. The days in these latitudes were exceedingly short.

Darkness settled down thickly. In a short while the sea was a pall of gloom.

In such a case only the intense glare of the search-light could break this. The sky was almost always overcast and the sea choppy.

Barney and Pomp were the watches aboard the Grampus. They alternated during the night, Barney usually going on the first watch. Pomp relieved him shortly after midnight.

It was just about time for Barney's watch to be finished when the Celt peered through the pilot house window adown the narrow path of the search-light, and saw what he thought was only a tossing waste of white caps.

The Grampus was moving along at ten-knot speed. Suddenly there was a shock—a terrific crash, the bow of the boat went up, and it seemed to the awakened voyagers that the end of the world had come.

"Golly fo' glory!" yelled Pomp, as he picked himself up. "Wha' de debil hab happened now? Suah's youse bo'n dis niggah hab bruck his back."

"Thunder an' gimlets!" roared Hawkins, rubbing his shins. "Who pulled me out of bed? B'gosh, if I find the man I'll make a skeer-crow of him."

But Frank had picked himself up with the instant realization that something was radically wrong.

He waited for no explanation, but started at once for the pilot house. When he entered he saw Barney peering through the window.

"Well!" cried Frank, sharply. "What has happened, Barney?"

The Celt looked puzzled.

"Begorra, Mither Frank!" he cried, "av yez kin tell yez are

smarter than I am. Shure I niver suspected anything in the way, an' me eye roight out this windy all the toime. But as thure as ye live, I belave we've run onto an iceberg!"

"Onto an iceberg!" ejaculated Frank. "Then ours is a hopeless case. Stand aside and let me look!"

Frank went to the window and peered out. The boat, save for a slightly perceptible motion, was perfectly still.

He could see that there was no water ahead. Indeed it looked like tumbled heaps of ice as far as he could see.

He flashed the search-light here and there. Everywhere was ice in heaps.

"Well!" he muttered. "Here is a pretty scrape. We have certainly stranded ourselves upon a berg."

"Phwat will we do, sor?" asked Barney, anxiously.

"It is not easy to say yet. But we certainly can make no effort to get off untill morning."

All went out on deck and looked about. But it was so dark that it was impossible to estimate the seriousness of their position.

The sea yet lapped the stern of their boat. But she had slid the whole length of her keel upon the ice.

Enough could be determined, however, to settle the fact that theirs had been a fortunate escape. The boat had struck a part of the iceberg quite level with the sea.

If it had run bow onto the side of the berg or any high surface, the boat would have been demolished at once, and all would have gone to the bottom.

"Which shows that we are in luck!" cried Frank. "We shall be able to get off all right to-morrow, I think."

Frank's greatest fear was damage to the keel or the shell of the boat.

Should the latter receive the slightest puncture, she would be ruined as a submarine boat. But he was sanguine that nothing so serious had happened.

Daylight came at last.

With its first gleams the voyagers were out on deck. Soon their position was thoroughly understood.

They had slid bow up on some pack ice, which was moored in a little cove or bay in the monster berg. All around them rose great glittering pinnacles and peaks of shining ice.

It was a scene never to be forgotten. Far up between the cathedral-like spires of transparent material the early rays of the rising sun played like liquid fire.

Day by day this monster from the frozen zone was drifting southward. Hour by hour its glittering spires were growing less, succumbing to the moist air and the gentle heat of warmer climes.

Long before it would reach the Middle Atlantic it would hardly be a semblance of its mighty self. Already streams were coursing down its sides.

Frank suddenly caught sight of a moving object far up in the icy heights. He called the attention of the others to it.

At first it was difficult to distinguish, being of the same white color as the berg.

But presently Barney cried:

"Bejabers, it's a white bear! Get your gun, naygur!"

"Golly, a Polar bear!" exclaimed Pomp, excitedly. "Fo' de lan's sake, dat am jes' our pie. Yo' wait, an' we'll jes' hab a bit ob a bear hunt."

Barney looked inquiring at Frank. The young inventor laughed and said:

"His pelt would look good at the cabin door. Well, be spry about it, for we must get the Grampus afloat again at once."

Barney and Pomp lost no time in getting ready.

Soon they were on deck with their rifles and all equipped for the hunt. Jed watched them with interest.

"Yez had better cum along, too, greenhorn," said Barney, jestingly. "Shure yez may be the wan to bag the game!"

"Not by a long shot!" replied Jed. "I hain't got no hankerin' for ba'rs. I kin hunt coons or squirrels with any man, but I don't know a dod-ratted thing about ba'rs."

All laughed at this frank admission. Then Barney and Pomp clambered over the rail and started on their bear hunt.

It was no easy matter to find their way over the treacherous ice. But they proceeded with caution and soon reached the base of the heights.

The bear could be seen far above, and Barney decided to risk a shot at him.

"Bejabers, it's a long thry," he said, "but it may count. Here goes!"

Up went his rifle, and he took quick aim. The report crashed loudly among the icy peaks.

Then a startling thing happened.

It seemed as if Barney's shot had been a dead one. The big brute came sliding and tumbling in a heap down the icy height.

He fell at the base of the height.

It seemed as if the fall alone should have killed him. Pomp gave a yell of delight, and rushed forward to be the first one to put a knife to the bear's fine skin.

But a startling and unexpected thing happened. The coon had barely reached the monster's side when it seemed to rise as if by magic, and before Pomp could escape it threw its powerful arms about him.

Only presence of mind saved the coon at that moment.

Quick as a flash he thrust his knife down the bear's throat. With this awful gag in his windpipe the bear could do nothing with his jaws.

But the powerful claws might disembowel a foe, though, as fortune had it, the pain of the knife thrust so blinded the bear that he relaxed his hold upon Pomp and thrust both paws into his mouth. Then he danced around the ice floe like a mad bear.

Pomp, however, now grabbed his rifle and emptied it into the beast's body. Another shot from Barney gave it its quietus.

Both hunters indulged in a shout of triumph. They had bagged big game and were justified in feeling gay over it.

But the bear's pelt must be removed, and time was precious. Both hunters went to work at once.

It was not long before the white fur was nearly removed. They were laughing and jesting in high glee when an unlooked for thing happened.

The distant crack of a rifle was heard, and then a faint shout. At once Barney sprang up.

"Phwat's that?" he cried. "Shure I think it's a signal from Mистер Frank."

"Golly! Dat am jes' it."

From the position they were in they could not see the submarine boat. Barney, however, mounted an ice cake, and then the scene which he beheld made his blood grow chill.

CHAPTER V.

A NIGHT ON THE ICEBERG.

POMP was almost instantly by Barney's side. What they saw was indeed thrilling.

The ice field had divided from the berg, and a great gulf of water was every moment separating them. This was carrying Barney and Pomp away from the Grampus and their friends.

"Howly mither!" ejaculated the Celt, in dismay, "it's in a scrape we are now! Phwat shall we do?"

Frank and Jed Hankins were seen on the deck making signals to them. These were answered.

Then Frank brought out a megaphone and shouted:

"Hang on where you are! We'll come back for you! We shall soon be clear of the ice we are on now!"

"All roight, Mистер Frank!" shouted Barney. "We'll howld on till the end av the worruld, av yez say so!" Then turning to Pomp, "It's all roight, naygur. Mистер Frank is comin' back ather us."

"I'se done glad ob dat!" said Pomp. "Hain't no hankerin' to stay on yere any longer den I'se obleeged to."

"We moigh, as well finish up skinnin' thet bear!"

"A'right, I'ish! I'se wif yo!"

So back they went and removed the pelt from the bear. Then they became aware of a startling event.

Something damp and blanket like was creeping down upon them.

They looked into the offing and were startled.

It was a dense fog which had suddenly shut down over the berg. They could hardly see their hands before them.

"Whurroo!" cried Barney, "shure, I don't loike the looks av this. Ken yez see anything av Mистер Frank?"

"No, sah!" cried Pomp, with consternation. "An' yo' kin bet we won't see him agen till dis yere fog lifts."

Despondent feelings now seized the two castaways. They shouted into the fog, but all in vain. No answer came back.

If Frank was within hearing it would seem certain that he would answer. But it was certain that he was far beyond hearing.

Barney and Pomp now had no means of knowing the true state of affairs. The submarine boat might be at the bottom of the sea for aught they knew.

There was nothing to do, however, but to indulge in patient waiting. So they sat down upon the bear's pelt and stared blindly into the fog.

A long time passed. It seemed as if months had drifted by. At length the fog began to dispel. A gentle breeze fanned it away into the atmosphere.

The outlines of the berg came out plainly, and then the surface of the sea and the sky. Barney and Pomp looked eagerly for some sign of the submarine boat.

But it was not to be seen.

It had vanished as completely as if the sea had swallowed it up, which might, indeed, have been the case for aught they knew.

Something like despair now began to settle down upon them. It seemed a hopeless outlook.

The berg drifted on hour after hour. They kept an eager watch of the sea, but the Grampus did not come.

At last night fell and hunger came upon them. The air was also cold and they were not warmly clad.

The dampness which shut down was most intense. For a long while the two castaways sat upon the ice pinnacle, straining their gaze into the gloom for some sign of the Grampus.

But at last exhaustion asserted itself and they fell off to sleep. How long they slept they knew not, but they were awakened in a startling manner.

But what of the Grampus? Had she really foundered and gone down with her two occupants? How had she so mysteriously vanished?

All these questions may be easily answered. Before the shutting down of the fog the drifting ice upon which the boat rested had carried her a great distance from the berg.

All this while Frank had been devising a skillful plan to launch her, and thus enable them to go to the aid of Barney and Pomp.

But this he found no easy task.

The boat's keel was deeply imbedded in the ice. It could not be dislodged in any easy manner. He hardly dared to use an explosive, at least not in the vicinity of the boat.

Then the fog came, and for hours not a glimpse of anything beyond the radius of a few feet was to be had. It was a most discouraging outlook.

When the fog lifted a change came. The ice floe seemed to go all to pieces. It cracked here and there into small sections.

Then a great crack came beneath the very keel of the boat, and she slid into the water with a mighty splash. It was a thrilling moment for Frank and Jed.

"Hoorah!" cried the countryman, wildly. "We're free, anyway, Mister Reade! Gosh dang it, we've got our liberty! Let ther eagle scream!"

It was certainly a pleasant contemplation that the boat, unharmed, once more rode the water intact. Frank lost no time in looking for the berg.

The fog had lifted, but, to his dismay, the berg was not to be seen. However, Frank did not doubt but that it could be found again easy enough.

So he set a course, which was a half circle, and should bring them, sooner or later, in sight of the berg. The Grampus kept on until darkness shut down.

Then the search-light was employed. Jed made himself vastly useful, and in fact was learning many of the ropes about the boat.

This aided Frank greatly. But it was long after midnight when the search-light traversing the sea showed a white-walled castle to the north.

It was a berg, and the Grampus made for it. As they drew nearer Frank was convinced that the berg was the very one he was in quest of.

So at the moment when he made the small ice-bound bay and sent the search-light's rays everywhere, Barney and Pomp were sound asleep. It did not take long to wake them up, however.

The glare of the search-light apprised them of the true state of affairs, and they were not slow in answering the signals made.

It was a joyful moment for all when they finally got back once more safely aboard the Grampus. Barney was thoughtful enough not to leave the bear skin behind him.

But they had enough of bear hunting for a time. As they reflected what their fate might have been, left on the iceberg, they could not repress a shiver.

"Begorra, I'll niver thry that thrick agin," declared Barney. "At any rate, not widout makin' shure that the boat is tied to us both."

"We have reason to feel very thankful that the affair was no worse," declared Frank. "In future we will surely use greater care."

"Gosh all hemlock!" put in Jed; "I thought yew war doin' something mighty foolish, but I didn't hev any idee yew would git intew sech a bad scrape!"

This ended the affair, and it was a wholesome lesson for the navigators. The rest of the trip to Cape Farewell they had no inclination to visit passing icebergs.

And one day, in the chill gray sky of the north, they saw a great black headland. Frank looked at his chart and declared:

"It is Cape Farewell, of the Dutch. The real Cape Farewell is further to the east."

"How do yew make that out?" asked Jed. "According tew my jography Cape Farewell is jest in one place. Thar ain't no two on 'em as I knows of on ther coast of Greenland."

"Well, your geography was a limited one, then," said Frank. "There are, plainly speaking, two Cape Farewells on the coast of Greenland. One of them is claimed by the early Dutch explorers as the true one, and it appeared on the earlier charts. But they were in error."

"I don't wonder!" said Jed, sententiously. "I never seen a Dutchman get a thing right yet."

"Oh, we must not forget that the Dutch once had the most powerful navy on the seas," said Frank. "Her Van Tromp was an admiral whose peer has hardly existed since."

"Well, mebbe so," said the countryman, loquaciously. "I reckon yew know more about natural history than I do. I'll 'low you're right."

Barney and Pomp did not have much to say about their bear hunt. Jed, like all Yankees, was fond of practical jokes, and liked to jolly them about it.

This disgruntled them, and they got together and mutually agreed to play such a joke on the Yankee that he would be forever willing to let them alone. It took them a long while, however, to evolve it.

Finally a brilliant idea came to Barney. There was but one hindrance to its complete success, and this was the possibility of Frank Reade, Jr., becoming cognizant of it.

Barney and Pomp knew that Jed kept the precious vellum manuscript in his state-room, and guarded it as his life. Moreover, he had always a haunting fear that they would be overtaken by a pirate some day and the valuable manuscript stolen, and their throats all cut in the bargain.

Of course Frank had laughed boisterously when Jed first intimated such a possibility to him.

"Nonsense, Jed," he said. "There are no pirates on the seas, nor have there been such for a hundred years or more. Don't lose any sleep on that account. Besides, they couldn't catch us, for we could go below the surface and keep out of their way."

This temporarily reassured Jed, yet every time a sail was sighted he was bound to watch it with the deepest of interest for fear it might really be the dreaded pirate, so strong was the idea in his brain.

Now, the plan of the two jokers was substantially to make up as pirates and steal into Jed's state-room at night and hold him up. With pistols at his head, he would, of course, give up the manuscript, which they would keep until the joke was exploded.

It was a brilliant scheme, and there seemed but one risk, and this was that Frank Reade, Jr., might get onto it.

His state-room, however, was some distance removed from Jed's, and, unless the uproar was very great, he might not hear it.

At any rate, Barney and Pomp decided to undertake the exploit. They at once formulated their plan.

They ensconced themselves in a corner of the forward hold to talk matters over and settle the details. And this resulted in a most unfortunate thing for them.

What this was events were to disclose.

CHAPTER VI.

TURNING THE TABLES.

It chanced that Jed had an errand into the hold at about that time. When the Yankee came aboard the boat he had smuggled a suspicious-looking brown jug in his luggage. This he had concealed in the hold.

It contained apple-jack, of which Jed was very fond.

He knew that if Barney and Pomp dreamed of its presence aboard it would not long be in existence. Moreover, he was not sure that Frank Reade, Jr., would permit such a contraband article as cargo.

So he was very particular to keep it in a secret place, and only at unobserved times would he descend to wet his whistle.

On this occasion he had just indulged his surreptitious thirst when he heard Barney and Pomp drop into the hold.

Instantly he sank down behind a pile of water casks. Here he was in the deepest gloom.

His first impression was that the two jokers had spotted him, and were about to make a descent upon him. But events soon undeceived him.

Barney and Pomp squatted down on the other side of the casks, and then ensued a conversation which was indeed a revelation to the Yankee.

He took it in with open ears and many a silent chuckle.

"I tell yo' we jes' skeer de life out ob dat countryman," asserted Pomp. "Yo' see if we don't. We done mek him flink his las' hour hab come."

"Bejabbers, yez kin bet on that," agreed Barney. "Now, yez understand the plans, do yez?"

"We am to make up as pirates, yo' say?"

"Yis, and reglar Captain Blackbeards, too. Shure, we'll frighten the loife out av him."

"We am to make him gib up dat manuscript?"

"Shure!"

"Golly! won't we gib him a good dose dis time?"

"Not on your necktie," chuckled Jed to himself. "Yer neighbor is right onter ther leetle job."

Barney and Pomp then elaborated their plan. Jed sat very still and took it all in.

After a while the two plotters went back to the deck. It was a long while, however, before Jed ventured out of the hold.

The Yankee appeared on deck in his usual unconcerned manner. Barney and Pomp winked and chuckled. But they knew not the whole truth.

Jed did not throw any barrier in the way of their plans. But he went on secretly making his own.

Now, Jed, unknown to any one on board, had talents of his own. He had one exceedingly rare accomplishment. He was a ventriloquist.

He had not as yet betrayed this fact to the others. So he felt safe in making it a concomitant in his counter plot against Barney and Pomp.

When evening came the Grampus was making easy progress in an almost calm sea. It was an easy matter to lash her helm and let her run her own course.

Frank, as luck had it, retired early. He was very tired, and at once yielded to deep slumber. This suited the plans of the jokers.

It seemed as if everything was going their way. Jed announced his intention also of retiring early.

"I'm dratted tired," he declared, with a yawn. "I hope thar won't be no racket to wake me up to-night."

"Not unless some ob dem pirates come along," said Pomp, apprehensively. "We am in jes' de right pahnt ob de ocean fo' dem."

"Hey!" exclaimed Jed. "If yew see their ship a-comin', jes' call me, will yer? I want tew be awake, yew bet."

"We will, sor," said Barney, stifling a laugh.

With this Jed slid down to his state-room. The two jokers remained on deck to slap each other on the shoulder and to chuckle and laugh immoderately.

"Oh, he am dead easy!" said Pomp, with hilarity. "I neber seen a bigger snap in mah life!"

"Whurroo! We won't do a thing to him!" cried Barney.

Several times they crept down to the state-room door and listened. All was the silence of the tomb in Jed's room.

He was apparently fast asleep. It seemed as if the coast was clear.

It was really Barney's first watch. Pomp was to relieve him after midnight. But the coon did not retire at all.

The two jokers sat in the pilot-house waiting for the right moment to come. They could look out on the moonlit sea and see that the course of the boat was clear.

At last it struck the hour of midnight. This was the time decided upon for action.

And work begun at once.

From various quarters there were produced the most villainous make-ups that the eye ever rested upon. A huge mask covered Pomp's face, so that he would not be recognized as a negro.

Barney wore black whiskers and long black hair, and made his face up with great red blotches and pimples. Then he donned a red jacket, velvet breeches, heavy boots, and stuck an arsenal of weapons in his belt. This, with a broad-brimmed hat, made of him the worst looking type of pirate the eye ever rested upon.

There was only one hindrance, and this was his brogue. This could not be disguised.

But Barney felt sure that in his terror Hankins would never notice this. Pomp was not to speak.

The game was to enter the state-room with a dark lantern and flash it in Jed's face. If this did not wake him, a piece of ice placed on his windpipe with a knife held before his eyes, would surely do it.

Then Barney was to demand the vellum manuscript on pain of instant death. It would, no doubt, be tremblingly delivered up, and Hankins would be adjured not to leave his bunk until daylight, unless he wanted to die.

It was a clever game, very cleverly arranged. But like many others of its kind, the powder was destined to flash in the pan.

Finally, fully equipped, the two jokers crept down to Jed's room.

Barney placed his hand upon the knob and silently opened the door. It swung open, and they entered the state-room.

A form lay silently in the bunk. Hankins was apparently sound asleep. Barney reached for his lantern. But as he did so, a sepulchral groan sounded at his shoulder.

The Celt gave a quick spring and looked around. Only Pomp stood in the doorway.

"Phwat are yez doin'?" whispered Barney, angrily. "Don't yez know that yez will spoil the whole thing?"

"Golly, I ain't done a fing!" was Pomp's whispered reply. "It was yo' dat groaned."

"Yez lie! It was yeself!"

"Huh! don't yo' tell me dat," sniffed Pomp, getting angry.

"Shut up yez mouth. Now for the game."

Barney reached for his lantern. A serpent-like hiss sounded right in his pocket where the lantern was. He drew back his hand as if stung by a serpent.

"Howly smoke!" he gasped; "what the divil was that? Shure, there's a snake somewhere about here!"

Again a sepulchral groan sounded, this time under his feet. This was enough. Barney slid out of the state-room, and Pomp with him.

"Golly fo' glory!" gasped the coon; "I done believe dat place am haunted!"

"Yez are a fool, naygar. Don't yez see the countryman lyin' there in bed?"

"I does dat; but wha' am dem groans? I tell yo' dat no human bein' eber made dem."

"Do yez think Hankins wud slape in a harnted room?"

"Don' know nuffin' about it. All I kin say is dat in my 'pinyun dere am a ghostis in dere!"

"Divil a bit!" said Barney, stubbornly. "Shure I'm goin' in an' see, anyway."

The Celt pulled out his lantern and drew back the slide. He sent the rays into the couch. Jed apparently lay in bed with his head covered up.

He was certainly to all appearances oblivious of everything about him. The opportunity could not be better.

"Come!" said Barney, beckoning to Pomp. "Now's the toime."

The darkey gathered all his courage and followed Barney into the room. But they came to an instant halt.

A nameless, indescribable white figure stood in one corner. It's face was a hideous monstrosity. Fire seemed to play in its nostrils, and it writhed like one in the agonies of the bottomless pit.

A series of sepulchral groans belched from it, and they were certainly blood-curdling enough. This capped the climax.

Barney gave a yell, and dropping the lantern, fled for the upper deck as if all the furies were after him. Pomp was quickly after him.

They did not pause until they had reached the pilot-house. Two more terrified jokers one could not imagine. Wild horses could not have dragged them down to Jed's state-room again that night.

"I tell yez the divil has got him," cried Barney, breathlessly. "He sat there in the corner wid his horns an' his hoofs, an' bad cess to him, he meant to have us, too!"

"Golly!" ejaculated Pomp, "I reckon we won't see no mo' ob dat countryman. Suah, de debbil hab got him."

All night long they sat cowering and trembling in the pilot-house. Yet they did not dare to give the alarm to Frank.

Morning came at last, and Frank came up on deck. He was surprised to see both Barney and Pomp on watch.

"How is this, Pomp?" he asked. "Did you relieve Barney last night?"

"Suah nuff, sah," replied the coon; "but we couldn't sleep, so we jes' set up togedder, sah."

Frank accepted the explanation as reasonable, and dismissed the matter from his mind. But Barney and Pomp were in dire distress.

"Wha' ebber we say when dat countryman done come out of his state-room?" asked Pomp. "Suah, we kaint 'splanify dat?"

"Bejabers, we'll tell him the truth thin that we heard groans down there an' goin' down to see phwat it moight mean, shure we see the divil hisself."

"Dat am so!"

But a few moments later the two jokers were electrified to see Jed himself very leisurely stroll out on deck, and going into the bow of the boat, sit down, and nonchalantly light his pipe.

They stared at him as if at an apparition. Barney's mouth was wide open, and Pomp's eyes as big as moons.

"Golly!" gasped the coon. "Wha' do yo' make ob dat, I'ish?"

"Bejabers, it's very quare," said Barney, scratching his head. "It must be that he's the divil hisself, an' we're jist a couple of red-hot jays, naygar. Shure, yez kin see how it is now!"

The two jokers exchanged glances, and then each felt decidedly like kicking himself. They tried no more practical jokes on Jed, the countryman.

CHAPTER VII.

THE STRANGE SEA.

THE Grampus rounded Cape Farewell, and now stood up along the eastern coast of Greenland.

All were agreed that it was now time to keep a sharp lookout for the two needles of rock which guarded the entrance to the strange sea.

Travel now was only made in the daytime, and the closest watch was kept upon the coast. Thus day after day passed.

Fortunately it was the region of summer for Greenland, and this made it easier to pursue the research, for the cold was not intense.

Bays and inlets, and even the mouths of rivers were explored. The instructions of the manuscript were closely followed.

But after a long period of fruitless search, the voyagers began to wax discouraged. Jed, however, had complete faith in the story of the strange sea.

"We'll find it yit," he declared. "You'll see that we will. Then we will all get rich right off."

Frank could not help a laugh.

"That seems to be your purpose in locating the Isles of Hearts," he said. "You do not attach much value to the geographical advantage discovered?"

"I'm thinkin' of thet gold," said Jed, frankly. "An' when I see it I'll be the jolliest chap on earth yew kin bet. Thet's what I'm after."

"I certainly hope you will not be disappointed," said Frank. "That would be too bad. You do not think it possible that the story told in the manuscript can be a chimera?"

"Not a durned bit!" said Jed, doggedly.

Frank had begun to grow skeptical. Yet he was willing to humor Jed's faith to the fullest extent.

And this proved a wise and fortunate thing. Two days later Barney came dashing into the cabin.

"Shure, Misther Frank?" he cried, "thim two needles av rocks are all in view, sor. I reckon we've found thim!"

Frank and Jed sprung to their feet. The countryman's face was lobster red with excitement.

"At last!" he exclaimed. "Durn my buttons, I knew it would come!"

Out on deck they rushed. Sure enough, far up the line of coast, two tall obelisks of stone stood.

As the submarine boat drew nearer it was seen that these were the work of nature, and not of man. They were simply shafts of stone rising from the rocky fringe of the shore.

They were exactly as described in the ancient manuscript. That they really marked the entrance to the strange sea there was little doubt.

Rapidly now the submarine boat drew nearer to them. It was a time of suspense for all.

From the sea, however, the closest observer could not make affidavit that a passage existed between the obelisks. It was as if the shore was in continuation.

But as the Grampus drew down closely upon the obelisks now it could be seen that a passage did really exist. It was an oblique channel between the two points.

Into this the Grampus glided. The channel opened up quickly, and then the strange sea lay before the eye.

It was a most remarkable spectacle, as witnessed by the voyagers. To the west, as far as the eye could reach, was the boundless expanse of white waters. This led Frank to exclaim:

"On my word, I believe this is a fresh water sea."

"Durned if it ain't a diffrunt color from the salt water," declared Jed. "And yet it connects with the sea!"

However, they were not yet deep enough into the strange sea to determine whether it was fresh or salt water. So the question was dropped for the time.

As the inner shores of the strange sea now were revealed, they were seen to be of a crimson hue. There were great cliffs of red rock and stretches of red sand.

The vegetation was extremely scarce, only a few stunted shrubs being seen here and there.

No sign of animal life was seen save a few flocks of sea fowl. Yet there might be human habitations back from the coast.

Right into the depths of the White Sea, as the newly discovered body of water was called, the Grampus sailed. The voyagers were constantly on deck with glasses scanning its surface.

"We will explore its surface first," said Frank. "Then we will make submarine explorations."

"Begorra, it's a foine body of wather, anyway!" cried Barney. "But I don't see no shore beyant."

"If it covers the area I think it does," declared Frank, "we may be out of sight of land many days."

"Golly!" cried Pomp, "I don't see no icebergs, and it ain't so cold in yere as it am in de open sea."

"You are right," agreed Frank. "And that goes far to prove the theory of many scientists that there are parts of the interior of Greenland of very moderate climate."

"Haow dew yew account fer that?" asked Jed, eagerly.

"There are several ways," replied Frank. "In the first place, volcanic influences would affect the soil and the water of the streams and lakes. The atmosphere would necessarily feel the heat radiating from such a large area, and only the most extreme of cold could even temporarily displace it."

"Then yew reckon there are volcanoes hereabouts?"

"Some of the largest volcanoes in the world exist in Greenland," declared Frank. "In fact, the entire continent is largely of volcanic construction. There is every reason to believe that it was once a region of great beauty and fertility."

"Gosh!" exclaimed Jed, "yew don't say! Whar did all this snow an' ice we hear about cum from?"

"Natural changes of climate through mighty ages have turned Greenland from a continent of smiling vegetation to a barren ice-bound waste. But Arctic explorers will tell you of deep valleys in its center, surrounded by volcanoes, where nature smiles as fresh to-day as she ever did. It is even said that some of these valleys are inhabited."

Jed listened with open mouth. All these things were wonderful revelations to him. He asked no more questions.

The Grampus sailed on. Land soon disappeared from view. Only the broad surface of the sea was about them.

The manuscript had declared that the ship of the first discoverers had sailed four days to the westward before the discovery of the Isles of Hearts. In that case Frank reckoned that in another day the Grampus ought to come in sight of these isles, for she ought to sail as far in two days as the old lumbering ships did in four.

All that night the submarine boat kept on at a steady rate of speed across the strange sea. The search-light made a radiant path for her to follow.

The next morning Frank was on deck early with his glass. As he stood on the bridge Barney suddenly approached him.

"Shure, Misther Frank," he cried, "we're not the only navigators in this sea."

"What?" exclaimed Frank, in surprise. "What do you mean?"

"If yez will look yonder, sor, there is a steamer ferninst the horizon."

"A steamer?"

"Yis, sor. Don't yez see the smoke?"

Frank looked in the direction indicated by Barney and saw, sure enough, a black column of smoke. It certainly did look like the trail from a steamer's funnel.

At once the young inventor ordered the course of the Grampus changed.

He held down at full speed for the smoke. Soon the distant steamer seemed hull down against the sky. Then it assumed tremendous proportions.

Now the truth of the matter dawned upon Frank.

It was a distant coast line he saw, and not a steamer. The smoke came from the peak of one of Greenland's many volcanoes.

The coast now unfolded itself for a great distance to the north. White-capped peaks were seen contrasting with green slopes.

Frank drew near enough to get a good view of the coast, and then changed his course to the southwest. Again the land faded from view, and only the limitless sea extended to the horizon.

But it was not many hours before a loud hail came from Barney:

"Land ho!"

In a moment Frank was in the conning tower.

"Whereaway?" he shouted.

"Two points off the bow, sor."

This was true. A distant, somber line was visible, but it was easy to see that it was only a small island.

However, this was just what Frank had been looking for. That it was one of the Isles of Hearts he felt sure.

As for Jed, he was beside himself with excitement and anticipation. He danced a hornpipe on the upper deck, and played a jig with his jewsharp.

All speed was now put on and very soon the island appeared quite close at hand. Its appearance was most striking.

The red sand and stone of which it was composed made it look like a ruby in a white setting. This for a moment gave doubt to Frank.

"If I remember rightly," he said, "the manuscript vellum spoke of the isles as being composed of black sand. This seems to be of a reddish hue."

"By jingo that's so!" ejaculated Jed. "Don't s'pose they made a mistake, do ye? I had a cousin who knew a fellow that was color blind."

"I hardly think those ancient explorers were all color blind," said Frank, with a smile. "But they may have overlooked one of the isles. However, we will soon be able to investigate."

Nearer the Grampus now drew to the Isles of Hearts.

For such Frank had no doubt they were. The other members of the archipelago soon appeared to view.

Frank did not seek a landing upon the first one. It was the smallest of them all, and its shores were very precipitous. Some stunted vegetation grew upon the cliffs.

The Grampus now entered a channel between the various islands, and a singular fact was noted.

Not one of them was of a subsoil similar to the other. Upon one the sand and cliffs were crimson; on another it was yellow, and another black, and so on through the gamut of colors. The largest of the islands, with its black sand and cliffs, seemed to contain the most life-giving elements, for it was covered with the thickest of vegetation, spruces, pines, beeches and larches.

This was, no doubt, the Isle of Hearts, spoken of by the early voyagers. Upon this Frank was determined to land.

He allowed the submarine boat to run into a little bay, and here anchor was dropped.

It was but a little ways to the shore, and the water was so clear that it seemed as if it could be easily waded. The water was like crystal.

CHAPTER VIII.

ON THE ISLAND.

AND this fact led to a very humorous incident.

Jed Hankins was beside himself with excitement and the desire to get ashore. He looked over the rail and cried:

"B'gosh, that water ain't a foot deep. Durned if I'm goin' tew wait fer any small boat; I kin wade ashore!"

"Howld on. Don't yez do it," cried Barney, warningly.

But Jed, who did not mind wet feet, had already cleared the rail. What followed was to him the greatest surprise of his life.

The water was so intensely clear that the bottom was greatly magnified, and thus brought almost to the surface. The depth was most deceptive, for where it seemed barely a foot it was in reality a dozen feet.

Now Jed was six feet tall, but this made it twice over his head, and he slid down to the bottom like a ramrod. His feet touched the gravel, and he shot to the surface again, perhaps the most astonished Yankee on the globe at that moment.

"Gosh, all hemlock!" he spluttered, as he struck out to swim. "I'm durned nigh drowned! What in thunder hev I dropped intew?"

Barney and Pomp nearly collapsed with laughter. Jed really had quite a hard swim to reach the shore.

He drew himself out soaked to the skin. It took him some time to get out of his clothes while dry ones were brought him from the boat.

Frank and Barney came ashore, Pomp being left on board the boat. They were equipped for the exploration of the isle.

There was no reason to believe that wild beasts or human foes would be found on the isle. Yet Frank deemed it best to go well armed.

Jed quickly got into his dry clothes and took his equipments. Then the party of three set out along the beach.

They skirted the face of high cliffs for a time. Then a place was found for mounting to their summit. It was a long and perilous climb.

But the view from the top rewarded them for their exertions. It was grand beyond description.

It was the same view doubtless which the other voyagers two hundred years before had witnessed. It proved beyond all doubt that they had reached the Isles of Hearts.

For, a most singular fact, it was noted that the isle upon which they were was a perfect shaped heart. In fact, all the isles were of precisely the same shape, and the archipelago made a cameo heart in the bosom of the White Sea.

It was a singular freak of nature, for nature must have been the author of all, though it looked for all the world as if the hand of man

had carefully chiseled out each isle. What was more, other features seemed to show the ancient presence of men.

In fact, Frank recollected that the old chronicle spoke of the leaving by mischance on the isles of some of the crew, men and women.

In that case doubtless the isles had been for a time the abode of human beings. Whether they had left descendants or not remained to be seen, but it was very likely that they had not. Doubtless all had perished long since.

However, Frank was determined to if possible discover the fate of these castaways.

Jed, however, was in quest of the gold so fluently alluded to by the ancient logkeeper. Thus far no evidence of it had been seen.

But the black sands were a characteristic of gold producing localities, and there might be plenty of the precious ore in the vicinity. That remained to be seen.

For the present, Frank was interested wholly in the general topography of the isles and their natural history. The discovery of gold to him, was only incidental.

Barney was on the lookout for game, or, a possible foe. In other words he was the scout of the party.

After making a mental map of the archipelago, Frank proceeded to descend from the cliff into the interior of the isle.

Progress was not difficult, for there was little underbrush. It was an easy matter to thread the mazes of the forests.

Far in the interior of the isle Frank had sighted an immense basin, or what looked to be the crater of a volcano long extinct. Its sides were high and precipitous and broken with huge lava blocks.

He was desirous of visiting this as he believed it would furnish evidence of the origin of the isles. He announced this fact to Barney and Jed.

Both were eager to try the trip. So they at once set out. It was adjudged to be fully five miles to the crater.

Down into the larch forests they plunged. There was no evidence that snow ever visited these isles, despite their high altitude.

The climate seemed of the most salubrious sort. In fact, Jed exclaimed.

"B'gosh, I kinder like this place and if thar was only some people hyar durned if I wouldn't stay hyar ther rest of my life."

"I don't blame you, Jed!" agreed Frank. "I am of the opinion that the climate is of the finest on earth. But I fear one would be lonesome."

"Begorra, fer all we know there may be some people about here," said Barney. "Shure, we haven't seen all yet."

"Let us hope they will prove friendly," said Frank. "Or at least—"

He never finished the sentence. At that moment all were brought to a startled halt.

The cause of this was a sufficient one. From some unknown quarter there arose a strange groan and wail, like that of a person in awful agony. It seemed to fill the air about them, and came from what quarter they could not tell.

As it shook the air with its chilling cadence and was wafted away upon the breeze, the trio of explorers stood spell-bound.

Frank looked startled and astonished. Jed looked fearful and open-mouthed, but Barney was as white as a sheet, and his teeth chattered like castanets.

"Howly murder!" he gasped. "It's come for me this time. It's the banshee's call."

"Gosh-a-mighty!" ejaculated Jed. "The chap that got off that groan must be pooty sick!"

The words had barely left his lips when the strange sound was repeated. This time it was louder and more spasmodic.

Barney was down upon his knees. Greater terror never shone in any one's face.

"Mither of Mary, presarve us!" he wailed. "Oh, for a dhrop av holy wather to dhrive the demon away. Saint Patrick defend us!"

"Nonsense, Barney," said Frank, sternly. "Get up on your feet. No human being ever uttered that noise."

"Shure, sor, I'm not afther sayin' it was a human bein', sir. Shure, the banshee is niver flesh an' blood."

"Let's have done with such nonsense," cried Frank. "There is no such thing as a banshee, nor did any spirit or ghost or hobgoblin ever make that noise."

Barney looked incredulous.

"Shure, Misther Frank," he asked, tremblingly, "phwat did make it, sor?"

"You may be sure that we shall soon find out. It is caused by some natural phenomena on the isle. I have heard of the rush of air through great caverns making a similar noise."

Barney crept to his feet, but he was not wholly reassured. However, the noise did not occur again, and the party went on their way.

The five miles to the crater were covered in less than two hours. Frank was the first to climb its sides.

And as he reached its edge he was greeted with an astonishing spectacle. The entire basin, fully a mile in diameter, was filled with water.

It was a placid lake which filled the extinct crater. That the water was the same as that of the White Sea was plain, and Frank realized that the island was thus almost an atoll, for this lagoon was doubtless filled by subterranean channels.

It was an interesting and curious discovery, and added to the peculiar features of the isle. It led the young inventor to believe that there were yet other discoveries of a remarkable character to be made.

"Whurroo!" cried Barney. "What if we had the Grampus here now! Shure we could sail around this lake!"

"We will have it here yet if possible," said Frank.

Both Jed and Barney turned in surprise.

"How will yez do that?"

"I have a theory," said Frank, "that there are huge subterranean channels under this island, perhaps under all these islands, and that they connect with this basin or crater."

"Shure, yez may be roight!"

"I mean to find out when we get back to the Grampus. We will take a little submarine voyage of discovery!"

"Whurroo!" cried Barney. "Let's go back now, thin!"

"Gosh dang it!" ejaculated Jed, "yew fellers kin go. Yew fergit thet I mortgaged my farm tew git hyar, dependin' on findin' a fortune in gold, an' thar ere mortgage has got to be paid off!"

"Hold your horses!" said Frank, coolly. "We will see that you have fair play, Jed, never fear. That mortgage shall be paid off, all right. But first we must explore these isles, and know just how to go to work?"

"Then yew think thar's gold here?" asked Jed, eagerly.

"Certainly, any amount of it. We will find that in due time. Now, don't get impatient, and leave things to me. I will bring things out right."

"It's a bargain!" cried Jed, impulsively. "Go right ahead. I'll stick by yew!"

"Shure, an' shall we go back to the Grampus now?" asked Barney.

"At once," replied Frank. "Oh! What is that?"

Suddenly the waters in the basin began to heave and roll, and in the center a jet of water sprung fifty feet in the air.

Then followed the same strange wailing and groaning, and the waters became calm again.

Frank watched the phenomena with eagerness. All was now explained.

Barney and Jed also seemed to grasp the idea. The former recovered from his terror.

"Howly smoke!" he gasped. "Phwat a noise the wather makes!"

"Now you can see," said Frank, with a smile, "that it is the water which makes that noise, and not a banshee."

Barney looked crestfallen. Frank went on to explain the phenomenon.

"Somewhere in the bowels of the earth," he said, "there is a quantity of gas which at intervals is forcibly expelled from the crater. In its passage it makes a queer noise, and also in forcing its way through the water. Now that we have found the explanation of this, let us return to the Grampus, as the hour is late."

CHAPTER IX.

THE FATE OF THE CASTAWAYS.

THE party of explorers at once set out upon the return to the Grampus. They decided to take a different route on the return.

And this led to other surprising discoveries. The first of these settled an important question.

As they emerged upon a little plateau Barney suddenly gave a cry of surprise:

"Look!" he cried. "Shure it's a number of houses. But phwere are the people?"

"Houses!" exclaimed Jed. "B'gosh that's so."

Frank saw that Barney was right. At the far end of the plateau there were to be seen a number of structures of stone. They were of rude construction and long since fallen to ruin.

But they could have been made only by human hands and at once settled the question of the occupation of the isle by human beings. Were they the white castaways or some tribe of native people?

This could only be settled by an exploration of the ruins. So the explorers approached them with all haste.

They reached the first habitation. It was made of blocks of stone rudely plastered together. The roof had been made of logs and earth, but this had long since rotted away.

There was no indication that any human being had dwelt in the place for many years. The voyagers crossed the threshold of the rude domicile and looked into what had once been its interior.

It was only a heap of debris now. There were the remains visible of a rude oven and a stone bench. No utensils of any kind were found, no relics which would give a clue to the identity of these dwellers long passed away.

From one hut to another they went. Finally only one remained. But as they were approaching it Frank noted a symmetrical row of stones a short distance away.

"Ah!" he cried. "Here is a clue!"

In a few moments they had reached the rude burying ground. There were ten graves in all. Each had a tablet of stone, and on each was rudely cut the names of those there buried. It was easy for our adventurers to read them.

The first in the row seemed the oldest. Thus it was inscribed:

"HENRI BODINE,

"Died 1692. Aged 71."

He was doubtless the first of the castaways to pass away. Beside him rested his wife, who died two years later. The succeeding graves covered a period of fifty years, showing that for over half a century the castaways had peopled the isle.

Children had come to them also, but singularly enough, all had died, so that there was no perpetuation. But these ten graves did not represent all the members of the colony.

Somebody must have covered up the last grave. He might have been the last man. What had become of him?

Had he also died on the isle, or had he made his escape and returned to civilization? There was no evidence that he did not have companions.

But this was a question which soon found answer.

Entering the last hut, it was found in a better state of preservation than the others.

In one corner a bunk made of stone slabs was seen. On this was traced the barely visible remains of a skeleton.

Over it, on the stone wall of the hut, was scratched:

"1710 A. D.

"Ye Last Man.

"JOHN BODINE, SON OF HENRI BODINE.

"Welcome Death."

It was a tragic and thrilling obituary and epitaph combined. The explorers gazed upon it silently. Reverently they removed their hats.

It was a strangely impressive thing to think of. That this was the last survivor in this little world of the castaways, and that he had died without a ministering hand to give him comfort!

What the pall upon his mind must have been, what the dreary loneliness, the lack of companionship must have been to him, not even the human fancy could picture.

Silently the three adventurers turned from the hut.

There was nothing they could do. Not enough was left of the remains to warrant consignment to a proper grave.

But in the open air Jed said:

"Jerusha Jimcracks! That was a tough thing fer thet poor chap! I'm durned sorry fer him."

"Begorra, it was a hard fate," declared Barney. "Shure, an' niver a good father to absolve his sins!"

The fate of the castaways mentioned in the vellum manuscript was now known. It was a tragic one.

But the explorers soon found their attention claimed by new and exciting incidents. They started out again on their return to the Grampus.

It was not long now before they came to the cliffs and saw the submarine boat lying in the little bay below.

Frank made a signal to Pomp, who answered it. Then all descended to the shore and prepared to go aboard the Grampus.

Soon they were safely on deck. The incidents of the expedition were narrated to Pomp.

The ducky was interested, and especially was he pleased with the idea of the submarine expedition.

"Golly!" he declared, "dat am jes' de proper caper. I done hope we hab some 'sperience undah de watah. Dis far it hab been on de surface."

"Begorra, it am loikely to be a hot experience," cried Barney. "Shure it's into a flooded volcano we're afther going."

"Yo' don't say dat?" said Pomp.

"Yis, I do!"

"Golly! I hope we won't git into no hot watah, fer shuah?"

"It won't be the first toime fer the loikes av ye!"

"Hu! you'se a berry funny young man, you is. Look out yo' don't git so sharp dat yo' cuts yo'se'f!"

"Shure there's no danger av that wid sich a hard head as the loikes av yesilf to take the edge off me!" retorted Barney.

The two jokers looked at each other hard, and it seemed for a few moments as if they were really bound to have a ruction. But at this moment Frank called them.

"Get all ready!" he cried. "We're going to take the plunge!"

"Gosh-a-mighty!" exclaimed Jed. "I think I'll git intew ther cabin, fer one plunge a day is enuff fer me."

Barney and Pomp laughed at this, fer they had not forgotten Jed's attempt to wade ashore.

But it did not take long to get things in readiness for the deep sea plunge. Soon the doors and windows were hermetically sealed, and the submarine voyagers were safe in the pilot-house.

Frank touched the tank lever and instantly the boat went down. Then the electric lights were turned on.

The search-light made it possible to see quite a distance ahead under water. The Grampus glided out into deeper water.

Frank knew that somewhere there were passages leading beneath the isle. To find these was his purpose.

Along the bottom of the White Sea the Grampus crept.

The submarine depths presented a scene of great beauty. It would have been difficult to imagine anything to excel it.

There were reaches of vari-colored sand, reefs of stone and coral, with enticing grottos, and caverns hung with sea moss and vines.

In these alluring retreats lurked fish and crabs of voracious appetites. Sometimes they must rush out as if to attack the Grampus.

Frank kept a patient watch for the honeycomb passages which he felt must exist under the island. Suddenly he looked up at the gauge dial and gave a great start.

"Jupiter!" he exclaimed. "We are traveling fast. What does that mean?"

He knew that there was not much steam on, and that the submarine boat was going slowly so far as its machinery was responsible. But the mystery was soon solved.

He began to study the current outside, and soon reached the conclusion that the boat was in a powerful undertow, and was being carried swiftly he knew not where.

Before he had time to reverse the engines the climax came.

Suddenly and without warning a great deep sea cavern yawned before them, and into it the boat sped.

Overhead was a roof of whitest coral, and the walls and floor were of the same. Frank knew that they were being sucked into some unknown depth at frightful speed.

Fearful of a collision with some part of the passage he shut off speed entirely. But he might as well have spared himself the trouble.

The current was more powerful than the machinery, and the Grampus was utterly unable to stem it. Yet she did not come to harm.

On she rushed at top speed. Where was she going? Frank could not imagine. But he hung to the wheel and kept a watch ahead.

Thus she continued to speed on for what seemed a long time. Then the end came.

The roof and walls of the cavern vanished. They were again in open water, and in a few moments it became apparent that she was out of the current.

She rested almost motionless, and below her was a rocky bottom cut into deep fissures. Frank felt a thrill.

"Can it be that we have come into the crater?" he asked with amazement. "In that case, we have been fairly hurled into it."

"Shure, sor," cried Barney, "wouldn't it be a good idea, sor, to take a small thrip to the surface, an' be afther seeing phwere we are?"

"It is the plan," replied Frank. "Up we go!"

He touched the tank valve, and the boat began to rise. Up she went steadily.

Then suddenly the surface was broken. She rose into daylight, and the submarine voyagers rushed to the windows.

The scene they beheld was to them a surprising one. About them were smooth water and high walls of jagged rock. One glance was enough.

They were in the crater.

"Whurroo!" cried Barney, "we've done it, Misther Frank. Here we are!"

"You are right, Barney!"

But there was a cloud on Frank's face. One terrible question confronted him.

They had entered the crater easily enough. But could they leave it at will? Certainly not through the passage by which they had just entered.

In the event of inability to find a passage out of the crater, their position was serious, indeed.

They would be obliged to stay there for life. All hope of escape would be removed.

It was a serious moment, and there was little wonder that Frank both looked and felt serious.

CHAPTER X.

WHERE?

THE strange phenomena of the crater had no doubt caused the unceremonious transposition of the submarine boat.

It established the fact that a deep tunnel did connect it with the open sea. Also that a vessel could pass through this underground channel provided it was of the size and build of the Grampus.

However, they were in the crater lake, and there was nothing to do but to make the best of it.

Frank would not believe but that there would be a way out of it. He even considered the possibility of blowing a channel to the sea with dynamite.

However, for the present the young inventor was determined not to worry. They were in the crater, and he was determined to explore it.

So, after taking a look at the upper world, Frank touched the tank lever again and caused the boat to sink.

Down it went again to the bottom of the crater. It was a strange scene which was revealed in the glare of the search-light.

The bed or bottom of the crater was in places rough and jagged. But there were intervals of smooth hard surface where the liquid lava had been turned to adamant by the cooling waters.

It was plain that an influx of the sea had quenched the crater fires.

What a shock to nature this must have been could be easily seen.

There were great rents and fissures and mighty upheaved blocks of stone to show the force of many explosions. The region about must have been terribly shaken.

But the main throat of the volcano must yet be open, for it alone could explain the frequent belchings of gas which sent columns of water into the air. Frank was curious to take a look at this.

There would certainly be some risk in this for they might pause over

the orifice just in time to receive the force of an eruption. This would likely be fatal to the boat.

So the young inventor proceeded with great caution.

Along the bed of the crater he crept with great care, until suddenly a deep yawning pit showed in front of the boat. Along the verge of this the Grampus slowly crept.

The voyagers all held their breaths, for they well knew the risk they were incurring. At any moment they might receive a death blow.

Frank sent the rays of the search-light deep into the orifice. But it, of course, could not penetrate to the bottom.

When it was reflected that this might extend for miles into the interior of the earth the senses were palled. Indeed it was a gigantic reflection.

Around the orifice the submarine boat made its way. Suddenly a strange and ominous vibration was felt.

Like a flash Frank whirled the boat about and shot off at a tangent. He was none too quick.

When hardly one hundred yards had been covered the eruption came. The water boiled about the Grampus as in a caldron.

The boat was whirled and tossed about like a toy. Suddenly it seemed to cease its gyrations and shoot ahead like a meteor.

Then the submarine voyagers beheld an appalling fact. Looking out of the observation windows, they saw the walls and roof of a narrow passage again about them.

"Great Jeremiah!" cried Jed; "we're in ther tunnel agin, an' makin' fer ther open sea."

"Whurrool!" cried Barney. "Phwat do yez say to that, Mистер Frank?"

"Reverse the engines!" cried the young inventor. "If we strike anything at this fearful speed, we shall be dashed to pieces!"

"All roight, sor!"

Barney obeyed the order.

But he might as well have tried to put reins upon the wind. The boat did not in the least abate its headlong course.

On it sped like a rocket. It seemed a miracle that there was no collision with the walls of the passage.

Around sharp corners and through narrow passages the boat sped. On and on, faster and faster.

The voyagers could only hold on and stare down the passage ahead, made plain by the search-light. It seemed to them as if ruin was certain to come upon them.

What would be the end of it all? Where would they stop?

Were they going into the bowels of the earth? Where? These were the queries that found shape in their brains.

They could only wait for the answer. An hour passed. Then suddenly there came a change.

The speed of the boat abated. She answered the revolutions of her screw, and the submarine travelers now saw that the walls of the passage were no longer about them.

They were again in open water. Frank touched the tank lever and the boat sprang upward.

Again she broke the surface, and again they saw the light of day about them. But this time they were in the open sea. It lay about them in one great expanse. To the north was a high coast line extending east and west as far as the eye could reach.

But the Isles of Hearts were not to be seen. To the south lay only the broad unbroken sea.

Astonished beyond measure, the voyagers gazed about them. Then Frank exclaimed:

"Where are we now?"

"Shure, sor, phwere are we?" cried Barney, in perplexity. "I niver saw that shore before!"

"Golly, I done reckon we'se gone right clean froo de ear!" declared Pomp.

But Jed stared about him with blank dismay.

"Dern my socks," he groaned, "whar are them islands gone? It's just as I thought. We've lost 'em and all ther gold, tew."

"Nonsense!" said Frank, impatiently. "Don't be foolish! We will find them again. Change the course of the boat to the south, Barney."

"All right, sor."

The Celt obeyed the command, and the boat came about. The course was made right out to sea.

The Grampus ran on at full speed until all land had faded from view. For hours it kept on thus.

It now became apparent that they could not have traveled all this distance underground. The isles were certainly not in this direction.

Again the course was changed to the west. After going a reasonable distance in that direction, Frank brought the boat about in a long, sweeping circle. After many hours of this sort of sailing, the high red cliffs to the north showed again.

They had come right back to the point of beginning. One apparent fact dawned upon the voyagers now.

They were certainly lost.

They had not the slightest idea where they were. It was a curious bit of ledgerdom which puzzled them.

"Wall, by jingo!" ejaculated Jed, "kin yew tell me whar we ar? It don't look tew me as if we war anywhar near them islands. What dew yew say?"

"It looks very strange," said Frank, completely mystified. "Drop anchor, Barney. We will stay here until to-morrow."

Nightfall was at hand. There was no use in continuing the quest until another day should come.

"However, the voyagers were safe and the boat was intact. For this they had reason to be thankful.

Jed bemoaned the loss of the gold, but Frank said:

"That is a very small matter to take to heart, and we will see that you are not a loser. It is easy at any time to find a fortune under the sea with the submarine boat. So have no fear."

This silenced the Yankee. The party now enjoyed better spirits. They had good reason for mutual congratulations.

Their escape had been very narrow. Horrible indeed would have been their position had the submarine boat become wedged in the passage, or had it struck an obstruction.

Their fate would never have been known to the end of time.

As it was, they were safe on the surface of the strange sea. God's blue sky was above them, and freedom was about them. This was much to be grateful for.

The night passed quickly enough.

All were exhausted, and as there was not the slightest fear that a foe might be lurking about, no watch was kept.

However, at an early hour the next day all were astir.

It was Frank's purpose to go ashore and gain some height of land from which he could, if possible, locate their position.

He was much puzzled to know just where they were. So, after Pomp had served a good breakfast, he said:

"Barney, get out the small boat. We will go ashore!"

The Celt turned a handspring.

"All roight, sor!" he cried. "It's mesilf as is wid yez."

It did not take him long to get out the boat. Of course, Jed was also anxious to go with them.

They were not but a few hundred yards from the shore. It was not a long pull.

Soon the boat ran up on the sands and they leaped out. Barney drew the boat up under the cliff.

Then they skirted the cliff for a ways until it was found easy of ascent. Up it they climbed.

Not until they reached the very summit was an extended view had. There a startling surprise was accorded the voyagers.

The cliff was only a long, narrow neck of land, extending east and west as far as the eye could reach. One mile in breadth, beyond it were the waters of another sea.

That this was the very sea they had left somewhere before Frank had no doubt. But what an immense distance they must have been carried.

For far to the north on the horizon, he saw a few small dots which he reckoned were the Isles of Hearts.

Under the sea, and under this neck of land they had been carried. It was almost past belief.

"Whew!" he exclaimed, "we must have traveled fast. This is indeed a region of mystery, at least so far as submarine travel is concerned."

"Begorra!" cried Barney, scratching his head, "I'm afther thinkin' we'd better kape on the surface, Mистер Frank!"

"I think we had!" agreed the young inventor. "But the question is now, how are we going to get back to the Isles of Hearts?"

"Jiminy!" ejaculated Jed. "Dew yew think we kin dew thet, Mистер Reade?"

"We'll try it!" said Frank. "I see no reason why we cannot, if we can only find a passage."

And this was certainly the main obstacle.

CHAPTER XI.

BACK TO THE ISLES.

As far as the eye could reach there was no connection between the two seas.

But Frank had no doubt but that by sailing far enough to the west such would be found. He did not care to risk any more underground passages.

So they returned to the boat and the course was set in that direction.

Until the sun was high in the zenith the boat kept on. Then suddenly the cliffs ran down to a point, and around this the Grampus sailed.

They were again in the White Sea, but yet far from the Isle of Hearts. However, all speed was put on.

The submarine boat ran with great swiftness. In a few hours Barney, who was on watch, cried:

"Land ho!"

Everybody looked eastward, and saw a black speck on the horizon. That it was the island there was no doubt.

Every moment now it drew nearer and became plainer.

Jed could hardly restrain his excitement, and was as delighted as a child with a new toy. He walked the deck and studied the distant land closely.

Frank smiled, and said:

"It looks as if you would get your gold after all, Jed."

"Gosh dang it, I ain't afraid but I will. I wouldn't keer so much, if I hadn't mortgaged the farm an' said so much about it, thet it would give thet Melindy Curtls a chance tew laugh at me."

All laughed at this.

"Don't fear," cried Frank. "You shall have a chance yet to laugh at all the Hawkville people."

Nearer they drew to the Archipelago now. Frank sailed in among the islands and studied each with his glass.

Finally he said:

"I have done my work. Now let us get that gold for Jed and then we'll start for home."

This was a joyful announcement. Barney and Pomp hastened to execute the order.

Up from the hold of the Grampus there were brought mining tools of the most approved kind. These were classified and placed in the small boat.

"We will anchor very near the shore," said Frank, "and as fast as we secure the ore we will bring it aboard. This will not be difficult for I can see millions of it in that black sand."

Jed was in high feather.

He was everywhere at all times. He was eager for work of any kind. It was not long before the mining party was ready.

Then the boat put out for the shore. When the keel struck the sands the miners leaped out.

Frank's knowledge of gold mining was now of value to them. He located the claims which he thought would pan out the richest.

Then work was begun.

There was plenty of water to wash the ore with and chemicals to separate it from the useless matter. In a short while all the machines were at work.

Frank's prediction in regard to the ore bearing qualities of the region proved correct. The sands were weighted with the precious metal.

And in the course of the washings some very fine nuggets were found. Barney carefully separated the piles of gold dust and Pomp tied it up in bags. Frank and Jed worked the cradle machines.

Thus a week drifted by. Any number of canvas sacks of gold were stored away aboard the Grampus.

"Well," said Frank one day, "are you satisfied now, Jed? We have put six hundred thousand dollars' worth of gold aboard. Is not that a large enough fortune?"

The countryman's eyes danced.

"Why, the'll buy the hull township of Hawkville," he declared.

"Of course it will. Are you not content?"

"In course I am, an' derved ready to go hum. But look hyer!"

"Well?"

"I ain't agoin' tew take all this 'ere gold, yew kin bet!"

"Well," said Frank, "to pay for our labor, I'll make this proposition. Fifty thousand can go to Barney and fifty thousand to Pomp. I will take one hundred thousand, and you shall have the balance."

"Yew ain't keepin' enough," protested Jed.

"We're keeping all we want, and that is enough. Four hundred thousand is all you will need, and it will make of you the richest man in Hawkville."

"In course it will," cried Jed. "I'm tickled tew death! Whew! Won't Melindy cum to terms now pootty quick!"

"I should say she would!" said Frank with twinkling eyes. "And I'll wager she will be willing to marry you by telegraph too."

Jed looked a bit sheepish, but Barney and Pomp were considerate enough of his feelings not to laugh.

"Wall," said the Yankee sententiously, "I'm husted if I keer whether she does or not. She kin whistle, fer all of me."

This was rather an ominous statement, and the first expression Jed had ever made of any intention to relinquish his pursuit of Melindy.

The gold was all stowed aboard the submarine boat. There was no reason for longer delay in making the homeward start.

So as soon as possible the gold washing machines were taken aboard and all went back to the Grampus. The anchor was weighed and the boat drifted away from the Isles of Hearts.

Soon she was speeding away to the eastward over the bosom of the White Sea. It was a thrilling realization to the adventurers to know that they were homeward bound.

The next day the needles indicating the entrance were sighted. Then the channel was entered.

The adventurers took their last look at the White Sea. A few moments later the walls of the passage shut it from view, and the stormy waters of the North Atlantic showed ahead.

Out into the green sea ran the Grampus. As far as the eye could reach icebergs dotted it.

Suddenly Frank gave a great start and shouted to Barney:

"Bring me my long range glass. Hurry up!"

Barney vanished in the cabin. When he came out he had the glass. Frank took it and leveled it at a distant berg.

Then he exclaimed:

"Change the course four points, Barney. It is just as I thought. That is not a part of the berg!"

The berg at which Frank had been looking was four points off the bow. It looked at that distance to the naked eye as if a ship's pennant floated from one of its peaks.

And closer look at it with a glass revealed an astonishing fact. One of the white sides of the berg was really the sail of a ship, and the dark line along its base was the hull of a ship, which was apparently wedged in the ice.

That the vessel was in distress the pennant told. How she had come in her dangerous position could easily be guessed.

Doubtless she had run bow on to the berg some dark night. Unable to get off, she was being carried into the warmer waters, where,

should the berg "turn turtle" or collapse, she would doubtless be wrecked.

That she needed help was evident, and Frank was not the one to deny her.

The submarine boat bore down for the berg full tilt.

Nearer it drew, and more plainly the ship was revealed.

And now her position was seen to be a desperate one, and all hopes of saving her must be abandoned.

For she was practically broken amidships, and water washed into her hold. She was a hopeless wreck.

But what seemed strangest of all was the fact that no human being was seen on her deck or in her rigging. Had the crew abandoned her?

"They may have been taken off by some other vessel," thought Frank. "But it will be best to make an investigation, anyway."

So the Grampus ran up alongside the berg. A rope was thrown out, and she was moored to one of the pinnacles.

Then Frank and Jed climbed down upon the berg. They approached the wreck.

She was a fine vessel of the whaling type, and, to all appearances, had carried a large quantity of oil. The two explorers climbed upon her deck.

Then a ghastly find was made. Near the rail lay a row of objects covered with tarpaulins. They looked like human figures, and such they were.

Frank lifted the tarpaulins and saw four sailors, stark and cold in death. It was evident that starvation had been the cause of their death.

Then it was seen that the ship was really much battered, and that she had been long nipped in northern ice, which breaking up eventually enabled her to float away to the south.

It was a fate not uncommon with ships cruising in the Arctic region. The tragedy was a fearful one, though.

"Poor fellows," said Frank, commiseratingly. "They have not been dead many days. Are there no survivors?"

He approached the cabin stairs. At their head he paused, for he thought he heard a groan.

"Great cowslips!" exclaimed Jed. "Did you hear thet, Mister Reade? Thar's someone sick aboard this ship!"

Frank went down the cabin stairs with great haste. He burst open the cabin-door, and then paused aghast at a scene which he beheld.

Upon a couch in the cabin reclined the attenuated figure of a man. His face was drawn and ghastly, and his eyes hollow and sunken.

Over him knelt a young girl who, although not strictly beautiful, nevertheless was possessed of a comeliness and grace at once noticeable.

But her usual buxom figure was thin and wasted, her face pallid and agonized. It was plain that her suffering of mind was greater than that of body.

As Frank entered so unceremoniously, she sprang up like one in a dream and stared at him. The man rose instantly upon his elbow, and cried hoarsely:

"Is it a vision, Marie? Do I see aright? Oh, I fear the end is near!"

"Father!" exclaimed the young girl, tensely. "Do not excite yourself. Be calm!" Then she turned and gazed fixedly at Frank. She advanced like one in a stupor, and putting out one thin hand touched Frank's arm.

Then she drew a deep breath.

"You are a living being," she whispered. "Have you come to give us hope and help? Speak lightly for my father is very low, and the shock may kill him!"

Frank comprehended the state of affairs at once. He realized that these people were in the last stages of starvation and nigh final collapse.

In such a case the mental is oftentimes more severe than the bodily trouble. So he said very quietly:

"Have good courage! I shall help you all in my power."

As he said this he took the girl's thin hand in his. She seemed faint and overcome with surfeit of joy, but fortunately kept up.

Frank turned and whispered an order to Jed. The countryman sped away up the cabin stairs.

Frank now approached the man on the couch. His glassy eyes seemed like those of a corpse. The young inventor knelt by him and placed a finger on his pulse.

It was faint and flickering.

"Courage, my good man!" he said in a monotone. "I am a friend, and have come to help you. All depends upon your keeping very calm and quiet."

"It—has—been a hard struggle, friend," whispered the exhausted man. "I have tried to live for Marie's sake. I think—we—are the only survivors."

"I shall investigate," said Frank. "Food and drink will soon be here."

The sick man's eyes shone with wild joy.

"Heaven be praised!" he whispered. "My prayers will be answered. Marie will live!"

CHAPTER XII.

THE END.

FRANK placed a brandy flask at the sick man's lips. It nearly strangled him, but it brought new vigor for a moment to his frame.

He lay back panting on the pillow.

The girl, Marie, crouched on the other side of the couch. She watched Frank with a strange intensity.

It was not long before steps were heard on the stairs.

Barney and Jed entered.

They brought light food and drink. Very sparingly this was administered to the starving ones.

For hours the good samaritans worked over the unfortunate skipper and his daughter. After a while both sank to sleep.

They awoke a few hours later, refreshed and hungry. Plenty of food was now given them.

For forty-eight hours the submarine boat lay alongside, and Pomp taxed his skill as a cook. The recovery of the two survivors was quick.

The skipper was soon able to get upon his feet. New vigor ran in his veins, the blood came back, and color mounted to his cheeks. It would be only a question of time to restore his flesh.

Then he told his story, which was already very well known.

He was the master of the ship the Vulcan, whaler from Princeton, U. S. A. Nipped in the ice eight months previous, they had run short of provisions.

In the bleak ice field no subsistence could be found.

One by one the sailors died, and soon only himself and Marie, his daughter, were left. Neither would have survived another twenty-four hours.

"We owe our lives to you," he said, gratefully. "We shall not forget. Heaven will reward you!"

"We are human," said Frank. "We would not refuse aid to suffering fellow beings, and we ask no pay."

The girl, Marie, quickly recovered.

She speedily developed joyous spirits. To be sure, her father's ship was lost, and the crew had perished, leaving a dreadful memory. But that reconciliation to grief which a merciful Providence sends us had become hers.

Jed seemed to at once become interested in the captain's daughter.

He was a great, awkward countryman, but Marie made warm friends with him, and they were often together. This soon became noticeable.

The Grampus was well off Cape Farewell one day, when Barney turned to Pomp, and said:

"Shure, do yez know I think the countryman an' thet captain's daughter are sure to make a go av it. The big galoot can't kape away from her."

"Golly! don' know as I blames him, fo' suah! If I was a fine young white fellah now, I'd jes' go in an' cut him out, suah's you'se bo'n."

"Humph!" was Barney's reply.

But he made use of the hint conveyed by the coon. He seized every opportunity to sidle up to the pretty Marie. Jed noticed this and it made him scowl.

Marie would not have been feminine if she had neglected the opportunity for a little coquetry. This made life miserable for Jed.

But one day Barney came down into the galley where Pomp was with a long face and a lugubrious whistle.

The coon looked at him shrewdly.

"Wha' am de mattah wif yo', Fish?" he asked. "Yo' looks as if yo' had fell down and put yo' foot in yo' face."

"Humph!" sniffed Barney. "My cake is all dough now, naygur. Shure it's the marble heart I've been afther gettin'."

"The marble heart?" exclaimed Pomp, in affected surprise. "Who eber was so unkind as to use so kind a gemmen as yo' dat way?"

"Jest as if yez didn't know. The pooty little colleen to be shure!"

Pomp dropped his cooking ladle.

"Yo' don't say!" he exclaimed with arms akimbo. "Who am de pig in de poke?"

"Shure it's that country jay that don't know a whisky cock-tail from the ind av the worlud."

"Hum!" was all Pomp could say.

Then he fell to beating up pastry with all his might. Barney looked as azure as a blue-bottle fly.

But it didn't do any good. Jed certainly had the call, and Barney was left out of it entirely.

Finally Pomp made a desperate effort to explain the defection.

"Golly!" he said; "do yo' know I fink she must hab been told by someone dat yo' hald a wife in America."

"What!" cried Barney, leaping to his feet. "Jest yez wait until I foind me traducer! Misher Pomp, I name yez as my second."

"I'se yo' 'possum," said Pomp.

"Wait till I face the scoundrel!" cried Barney, tragically. "Wait for me return!"

And away he dashed for the deck. Pomp crept up to the top of the companion ladder and listened.

What he witnessed was not specially tragic. By the after rail of the Grampus sat Jed and Marie. They were leaning over the rail and the Yankee's long legs were sprawled half way across the deck.

Barney half crossed the deck and stood still. He surveyed the elephantine proportions of his rival and perhaps saw that after all the game was up.

Even if he succeeded in thrashing Jed, which was doubtful, it might only prejudice Marie against him. Very wisely therefore he abandoned the issue.

He turned back to the companionway and at that moment caught sight of Pomp's grinning phiz.

Then it dawned upon him that the coon was jollying him. This angered the Celt, and he proceeded to vent his spleen upon the coon, whose fighting weight he had often tested.

Failing to see any other available object at hand, he snatched off his shoe, a heavy brogan, and hurled it at Pomp.

The aim was deadly.

The shoe caromed off the coon's head like a shot from a duck's back. The blow would have brained a white man.

But Pomp only ducked and cried, with a burst of laughter:

"Try it again, Fish! Yo' ain't no good! He, he, he! Did yo' evah get left? You'se a big stuff, yo' is!"

"Begorra, we'll see!" cried the Celt, dashing down the ladder. "No man iver called me a big etuff an' lived to boast av it!"

But Pomp had gained the galley threshold, and he picked up the flour scoop. As Barney attempted to rush in he got the white contents full in the face.

It filled his eyes, nose and throat, and nearly strangled him. He retreated in hot haste, and the galley door slammed in his face.

He could not get at the coon to wreak vengeance upon him now. So he did the most graceful thing he could, under the circumstances, which was to retire to his state-room and wash up.

The voyage home across the Atlantic was without any thrilling incident.

Captain Benton grew hearty and well before St. Johns was reached, which was the point where he wished to disembark, for there was where the owners of the Vulcan resided.

Marie grew rosy and buxom again.

To be sure, her father had lost his all on the sea, save a few thousands in a Halifax bank. But the owners of the Vulcan would recover their insurance, and Captain Benton was resolved to leave the sea.

He had a penchant for mercantile life, and was decided to enter upon it in St. Johns, N. B.

"I've sailed the seas all my life," he said. "I've been shipwrecked in the Carolines and nigh eaten by cannibals, but th's last experience in the Arctic has been enough for me. Henceforth I am a land bird."

"For which I am very glad, father," said Marie. "You know my interests have all been ashore!"

"I presume there will be a double reason for that now," said the doting parent, mischievously.

Marie blushed and would not reply. But silence is oft-times more expressive than words.

It was a happy crowd which stood on the deck of the submarine boat as she entered Halifax harbor. From there the Bentons were to take the cars for St. Johns.

They went ashore, and Jed was the last to say farewell. He shook hands in his hulking way with Skipper Benton. But when he turned to Marie tears swam in his big, blue eyes.

"Gosh dang my buttons!" he cried. "We might as well out with it, gal. If I thought I warn't tew see yew agin I'd die right here, bust me if I wouldn't."

"Sh!" said Marie, with scarlet face. "What are you saying?"

"I don't keer a darn!" cried blunt Jed. "I'd jest as soon ther whole world would know it, an' I'm not goin' to cover it up any longer, nuther. Begosh, boys, this ere leetle gal is goin' to be my wife. Who are ye is big enuff tew stand an' say it kain't be so?"

Jed looked at Barney as he made this belligerent announcement. But the Celt faded into the background. The gauntlet was not picked up.

There was a stupefied silence for some moments. Then Frank advanced with a smile and said:

"Miss Benton, I must congratulate you upon the wisdom of your choice. Your husband is not only a modern Croesus, but a strong armed protector as well. I wish you joy!"

Marie blushing bowed:

"I thank you!"

But Jed fairly threw his arms about Frank and lifted him like a straw.

"Gosh dang it. I allus knew yew was my friend," he roared. "I'll never fergit Frank Reade, Jr."

"Look here," said Captain Benton with mock seriousness. "I am the most interested party here and I have not been consulted yet. Sir!" turning to Jed sternly, "when you bargain for a craft, whether it be schooner, sloop or brig, be sure you open negotiations with the owner!"

Jed nigh collapsed at this. For a moment he took the matter seriously. He looked pitifully at Marie. But the young girl laughed and said:

"Can't you see he's only joking, Jed?"

"Whoop-lal!" cried the irrepressible Yankee. "If that's the case, I'll do bizness with the owner now. Haow much dew yew ask fer this finest, trimmest-rigged, little craft afloat on life's sea, sir?"

This was a flight in poetical fancy which none had believed Jed capable of. Everybody applauded, but Captain Benton still affected seriousness, and said:

"Well, I have always reckoned her as worth, at least, one hundred thousand dollars—"

"In gold!" interrupted Jed. "Cheap enough at half the price, an' yew shall have every goldrunden cent of it an' more."

"Don't talk foolish, Jed," said Marie. "You might offer father a home with us on the farm—"

"On ther farm? Haw—haw—haw!" and Jed roared with laughter. Then sobering down he offered his hand to Captain Benton.

"I beg yure pardon!" he said. "Perhaps I'd better tell you, of something which you do not know, an' which I'm glad that Marie didn't know, fer I'm sure she's takin' me for myself alone. An' that's worth a good deal for me. Captain Benton, I kin make yure leetle gal one of ther happiest ladies in ther land, fer I have got four hun-

dred thousand dollars in gold of my own. Mister Reade here will swear to it."

Marie gave a little scream and clung to her father. Captain Benton turned pale.

"I trust there is no jesting here," he said.

"My word on it," said Jed, earnestly. "Marie, do ye love me any the less for it?"

Then the story of Jed's find and the consequent events was told. Captain Benton was stunned. He was entirely taken by surprise. But Jed's honest, whole-souled words soon put him at his ease. Marie was a bit more shy, but Jed only thought the more of her for it.

It was arranged that the wedding should take place within a month. Captain Benton accepted Jed's offer to enter upon a business as partner with him.

Of course the report of Jed's return and his luck convulsed Hawkville. The third day after his arrival home he received a daintily perfumed epistle.

"DEAR JED:—I, of course, did not mean one word of that foolish note which I wrote you when you went away. Come up and I will explain everything to you.
MELINDA CURTIS."

Jed sat down and wrote back:

"DEAR MELINDY:—I knew all ther time yew didn't mean it. But I didn't mean what I writ tew yew nuther. So we're square.

"Yures never, JED HANKINS."

The reader will acknowledge that Jed squared ends in a masterly fashion. And here we will drop him.

Frank Reade, Jr., Barney and Pomp, returned to Readestown safely. The Grampus was put in for repairs. Frank contemplates another cruise, of which the reader may hear at some future day.

[THE END.]

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